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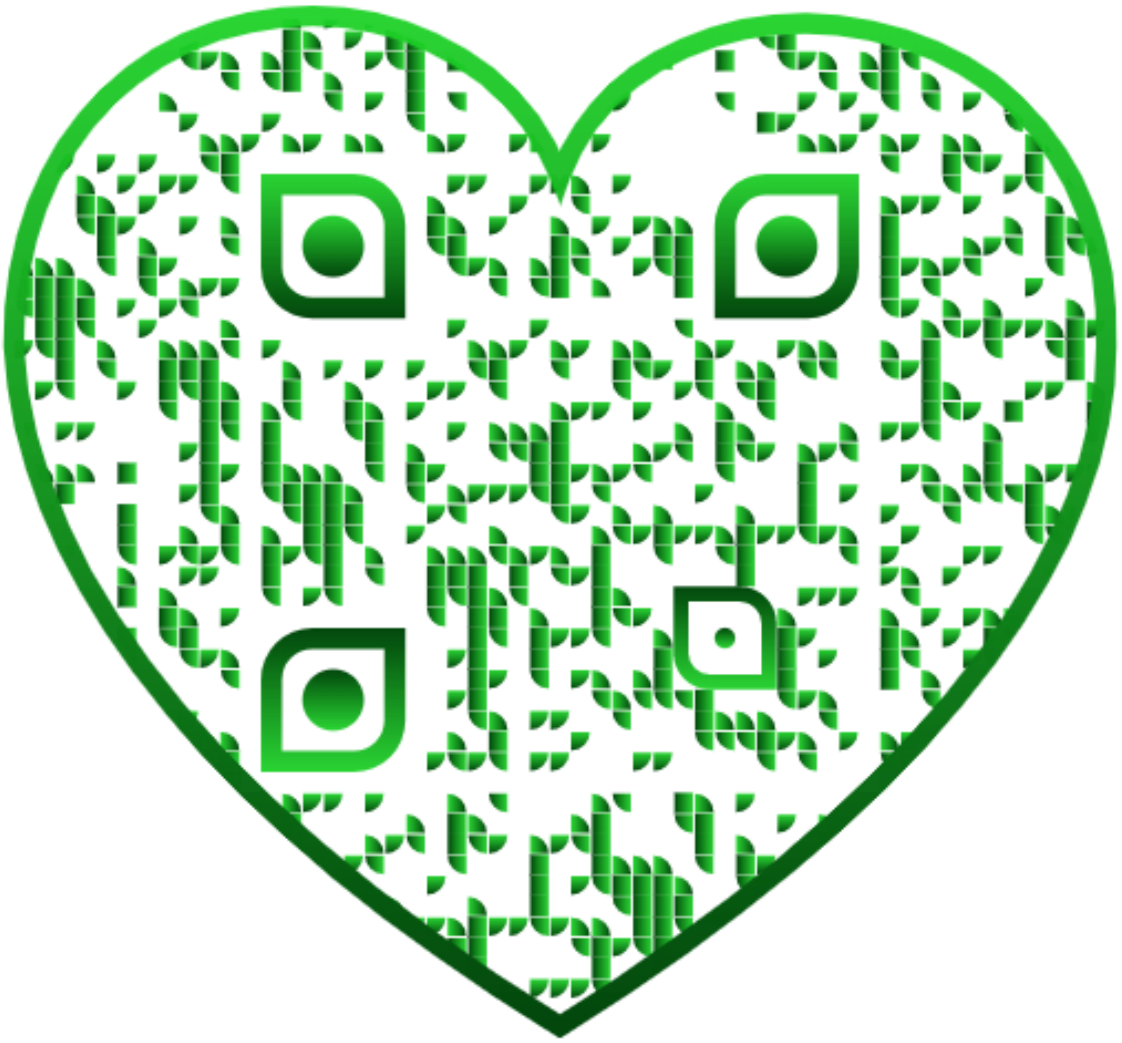

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Welcome...

A dead star that continues to emit energy until the end of time. That's how Peter Saville, Factory Records' creative director and designer of so many of their iconic sleeves, describes both his famous pulsar design for Joy Division's *Unknown Pleasures* cover and the Manchester label that was launched by Alan Erasmus and Tony Wilson 40 years ago.

Erasmus, Wilson, Ian Curtis and New Order manager Rob Gretton are sadly no longer with us, and the Factory may have burned down rather than faded away in 1992 under the weight of The Haçienda, but it continues to emit that energy today. It's with us through both the undoubted influence Joy Division and New Order had on a generation of indie-rock bands, and Tony Wilson's idealistic DIY manifesto – signed in blood – that's shared by a new breed of UK indie labels who refuse to 'sell out' in the face of turbulent market conditions. And lest we forget the black gold Factory left behind – *Unknown Pleasures*; *Closer*; *Blue Monday*; *Power, Corruption & Lies*; *To Each…*; *The Return Of The Durutti Column*; *Pills 'N' Thrills And Bellyaches…* and the lovingly curated Factory samplers.

Four decades on from its formation, Wilson's brainchild remains one of the boldest talent factories our nation has ever known

Four decades on from its formation, Wilson's brainchild remains one of the boldest, most uncompromising talent factories our nation has ever known, and this issue, we hear from some of the (few) survivors of this incredible story about how it unfolded. We also bring you a second extract from Jennifer Otter Bickerdike's excellent book, *Why Vinyl Matters*, in which Peter Saville walks us through the highlights of his fearless design career.

Elsewhere, we speak to Roger McGuinn about the tempestuous scenes that engulfed the making of the classic *The Notorious Byrd Brothers* album 50 years ago. We also sit down for a chat with Michael Head, formerly of Shack and among the nation's finest songwriters, about making one of our favourite albums of 2017 – *Adiós Señor Pussycat*. Another national treasure, legendary DJ Don Letts, gives us a guided tour of his enviable record collection, and our Classic Album is Stevie Wonder's 1973 masterwork *Innervisions*. Fab Four completists will want to turn to our Essential Beatles buyer's guide, while The Trip pays a long-overdue visit to Manchester.

Thanks for reading. I hope, like all of us at *Long Live Vinyl*, you've made it your new year's resolution to buy more records in 2018.

Gary Walker *Editor*

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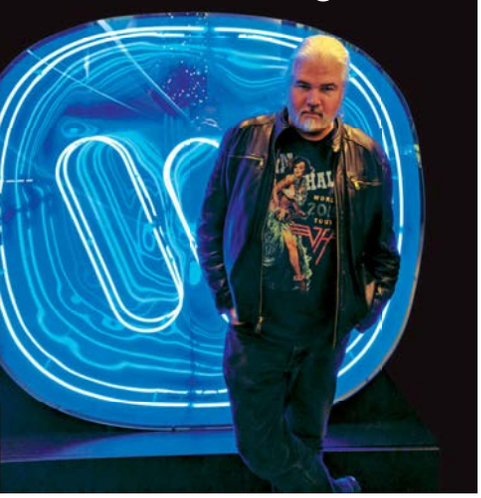

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LONG LIVE VINYL

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LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team pick their favourite Factory Records albums

Gary Walker
Unknown Pleasures
Joy Division

Owen Bailey
Pills 'N' Thrills And Bellyaches
Happy Mondays

Jonny Highett
Closer
Joy Division

Andy Cottle
Power, Corruption & Lies
New Order

Ian Peel
Circuses And Bread
The Durutti Column

Meet our expert contributors…

Simon Raymonde
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been a home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

Jennifer Otter Bickerdike
Dr Jennifer Otter Bickerdike is a media and music academic and author, specialising in fan culture, the cult of dead celebrity, music and music heritage. Jen's current book, the No. 1 charting *Why Vinyl Matters*, is a manifesto about the importance of vinyl as a cultural object, and has interviews with a variety of fans, including Tim Burgess, Henry Rollins and Fatboy Slim.

Chris Parkin
After stapling together fanzines as a teenager, Chris won promotion to the world of proper music journalism and a job at *Time Out London* in the early 2000s. He's since written for the *Guardian*, *BBC*, *NME*, *RBMA*, *Glastonbury Free Press* and others. He continues to cherish the memory of Mick Hucknall and Ray Davies hanging up on him in a strop during an interview.

Gareth Murphy
London-born but Dublin raised, Gareth Murphy's childhood was enlivened by his father's work in the 1970s and 80s as a pioneer concert promoter. Now based in Paris, he has produced numerous compilations and is the author of *Cowboys And Indies – The Epic History Of The Record Industry*. He has just completed Seymour Stein's memoirs, *Siren Song*, which will be released next year.

Gary Tipp
Gary has been collecting vinyl since time immemorial and still can't walk past a charity shop without going in on the off chance there's a mint treasure nestled somewhere in between the easy listening and the obligatory copy of Paul Young's *No Parlez*. He's also been writing words for magazines for longer than anyone can remember.

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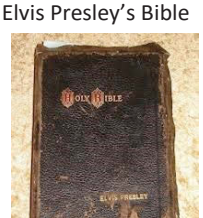

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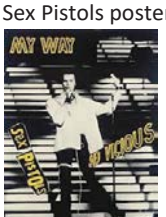

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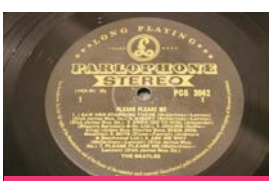

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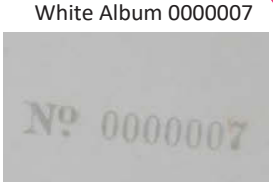

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On the record

The 45th anniversary edition of Roxy Music's eponymous debut is out on 2 February on 180g vinyl, cut from a Bob Ludwig remaster from 1999

CELEBRATING ROXY MUSIC

Roxy Music's debut is re-released on its 45th anniversary, with bonus demos, outtakes, *Peel Sessions*, a new Surround Sound mix and more besides…

Roxy Music will celebrate the 45th anniversary of their groundbreaking eponymous debut album on 2 February with special editions, including a new 5.1 Surround Sound mix by Steven Wilson, a 180g vinyl reissue and a DVD of rare footage. A wealth of bonus material has been added to the album: four early demos, 10 outtakes, three *Peel Sessions* and a five-track *BBC In Concert* set from August 1972. All of this previously unreleased material has been mastered for bonus CDs by Frank Arkwright at Abbey Road, while the original album set – and the 180g vinyl edition – use a remaster by Bob Ludwig dating back to 1999.

"In late '71, '72, Roxy was our arts lab," saxophonist Andy Mackay tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "The place where we exchanged ideas and dreams freely and created and explored a new sound landscape. We stepped into Command Studios with a complete album in our heads (and half the next one) and it only needed the tape to start running… no album was as easy to record again."

Bryan Ferry certainly looks back on the album fondly. "I can see how the old guard would have felt threatened by it," he says, "because it was so jammed full of ideas and a massive amount of energy."

ART OF PROPAGANDA
BMG's Art Of The Album series continues with a 180g repress of Propaganda's *A Secret Wish*, out 26 January. There are no extra tracks, but the release does add an extensive booklet written by our own Ian Peel.

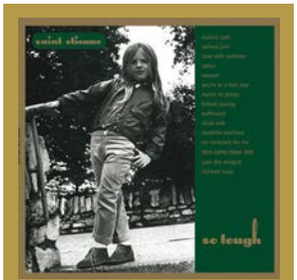
TONY'S 10TH
Genesis keyboardist Tony Banks releases *Five* on 2 February on double 12" gatefold vinyl. It will be his 10th album outside of the band and third classical set following up 2012's *Six Pieces For Orchestra*.

ROSETTA MARBLE
To celebrate Sister Rosetta Tharpe's induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame last month, ORG Music have pressed *Live In 1960* on 1,000-limited red-and-white marbled vinyl.

Return Of The Mac

The US FM incarnation of Fleetwood Mac made their debut back in the summer of 1975, when they released their (second) eponymous album, the five-million-seller that spawned classic AOR such as *Rhiannon*, *Landslide* and *Say You Love Me*. 19 January sees vinyl take centre stage in an extensive reissue project. *Fleetwood Mac Deluxe Edition* has a new remaster of the original album on both CD and 180g LP, a mountain of extras across three CDs and a DVD with a 5.1 Surround Sound and high-res 24/96 Stereo Audio mix. It's all packaged in a 12"x12" embossed sleeve with previously unpublished photos and new interviews with all of the band members.

"Also included is a second disc with an alternate version of the complete album comprised of unreleased outtakes for each album track," Warner Music says, "plus several unreleased live performances from 1976. Exclusive to the Deluxe Edition is a third disc filled with even more unreleased live recordings."



SAINTLY RECORDINGS
Saint Etienne have wrestled their album catalogue back from Universal to its original home of Heavenly Recordings just in time for a new set of vinyl reissues. *So Tough*, *Tiger Bay*, *Good Humor*, *Sound Of Water*, *Finisterre* and *Tales From Turnpike House* are all to be re-pressed, as will the *Continental* compilation. Originally released in Japan in 1997, it's since been reissued twice, first by Universal in 2009 and then by Heavenly just last year.

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Town Called Malice by The Jam: name the other No. 1 on the single...

A Dreams Of Children
B Precious
C In The City

HITS IN THE MOVIES

Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now by Starship: name the movie it was used in?

A Purple Rain
B Crocodile Dundee
C Mannequin

NAME THAT YEAR

It's A Sin by Pet Shop Boys remained at the top of the charts for three weeks in which year?

Popmaster Live! returns in 2018 with popular BBC Radio 2 presenter Ken Bruce as host. Our sister mag, *Classic Pop*, is looking forward to testing your music knowledge with their ultimate pop quiz. Fun, fast and full of prizes, the winning team members will each walk away with a pair of Audio-Technica headphones worth £169.

Also, to really get the party started, there will be a fully stocked bar. So start selecting your dream team now!

A limited number of VIP tickets are available, which include: the opportunity to meet Ken, a welcome drink, a copy of the official *Popmaster! Quiz Book* and front-row tables.

NEW FOR 2018

This ultimate music quiz features 11 rounds, including: Intros & Outros, Guilty Pleasures and Missing Words. There will also be two brand-new categories this year – Ken's legendary Name That Year and the Reader's Choice Round.

AUDIO-TECHNICA LISTENING STATIONS

Four brand-new Audio-Technica vinyl-listening stations will be making an exclusive appearance – giving you a chance for some last-minute high-fidelity swotting up before the quiz. On the night, there will be the chance for one lucky winner to win an Audio-Technica turntable. Come and join us to find out how.

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ANSWERS
1. Precious
2. Mannequin
3. 1987

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

Bella Union's founder takes stock of 2018's political landscape – and concludes it's probably best to hunker down with Nick Cave and take solace in new music…

If you're reading this in 2018, then somehow we must've made it through the Dark Age Of Orange-u-tan, a ghastly period in our planet's history, where all the dreadful stereotypes we've spent a lifetime being told to be afraid of (aliens, robots, communists, Bono, etc) turned out to be cuddly and utterly adorable after all, at least in comparison to The Man-ster In The White House. Our most vivid imaginations, born from decades of sci-fi comics and horror fiction, in film and literature, never prepared us for this.

Or just perhaps we didn't make it through after all, and you are indeed reading this in an alternate universe. In which case: "Hi! Pleased to a-meet you! My name is 'Bootsy' and I am a small dog – most probably a labrador cross, though I don't know what that means, because I'm always happy!" (wags tail furiously). Note: in a parallel universe, I would still be good old human 'Simon', but in the superstring theory of my alternate universe, I most certainly would be 'Bootsy'!

A new year is traditionally the time for wiping the slate clean and embracing fresh starts, when a dawning of great optimism will permeate the atmosphere. This time, however, no matter how hard we try, the slate won't wipe clean, caked as it is with the kind of stubborn blood Lady Macbeth had such trouble getting off. Soon, we won't even be able to head off to Europe anymore to escape the gloom.

We are well and truly trousered. Marooned – or rather Camer-ooned – and quite likely doomed. Brexit stage far-right. But wait, looka yonder! A big black cloud come. Comes to Tupelo-o-o!

A song of prophecy. Written 33 years ago by Nick Cave, Mick Harvey and Barry Adamson, about the terrors awaiting the town when that twisted tornado will surely come ripping through, destroying everything in its path. And like all classic songs that stand the test of time, they take on added meaning, and often even greater significance to each new generation.

The 'tornado' in 2018 is in many ways full of exactly the same stuff – wind, deceit in how it changes direction with no fair warning, the dregs and debris it carries around in its belly to spit out when it suits – except it is not a rotating column of air, it is a rotund man with an orange face who, with a permanent smirk, wreaks more havoc than any funnel cloud ever could. What we do know, that history has proven, is that tornadoes don't last so long. We are in the eye of the storm all right, but it will be over. Until then, keep listening to Nick Cave. There's a lot of treasure buried there.

Let's not think that there is in any way a dearth of new music worth writing about. New music has never been as good as it is right now, and that's exactly how it should be, too

When you've listened to all of Nick Cave's albums, you should save some time for some new music. There is, in much music-based print media, an overwhelming emphasis on artists from our distant past. There's clearly a market for it, but let's not think that there is in any way a dearth of new music worth writing about. New music has never been as good as it is right now, and that's exactly how it should be, too.

Giving my 'tips for 2018' isn't something I feel altogether comfortable with, for a number of reasons. You have enough lists already, be it the BBC Sound Of 2018 list or the albums of the year lists; plus any list I do as a label person tends to lead to unnecessary speculation about which bands I'm keen on signing, etc… But in these two cases, I'm just thrilled to pass on the recommendation, regardless of which label they end up with.

Weirdly, as I was keen on them both separately, they were recently on the same bill in Brighton where I live and, on this and subsequent shows, they've blown me away.

Firstly, there's a four-piece from Norway called Pom Poko. Their sound is thrilling post-punk, at times spiky and high tempo; at others, soulful and psychedelic, with soaring sensual vocals weaving in and out of the angular sounds. Watch them and go home and form a band.

Another four-piece I'm obsessed with are based here in Brighton. Called Penelope Isles, they have that hard-to-describe ability to be all my favourite bands in one, yet never sounding like any of them. Neither band have records out yet and both already have the songs – that's usually the bit most bands fall down on. So, most importantly, I hope you find something to enjoy. Here's to another great year of music ahead. ●

SIMON RAYMONDE ***is currently in Lost Horizons and was the bassist and keyboard player in Cocteau Twins. He founded the independent record label Bella Union.***

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
Classic-rock reissues on 180g and 140g vinyl from Sony this month include Leonard Cohen's *Ten New Songs*, Joe Satriani's *What Happens Next* and *Jeff Wayne's Musical Version Of The War Of The Worlds*.

TELEVISION REPEATS
Fire Records have unearthed a previously unreleased 15-track album by Television Personalities. *Beautiful Despair* was recorded in 1990 and gets its first-ever release (on CD, download and Television Repeats vinyl) on 26 January.

Analogue Lake

Prog legend Greg Lake has used the release of his new album, *Live In Piacenza* as a means to get back to his analogue roots, embrace the vinyl resurgence and reboot ELP's famous Manticore Records label. "The show at Teatro Municipale – from the last date of the last tour – was recorded and I decided to release a collector's edition of it on vinyl," he explains. "Somehow the event, the feeling of the music and the atmosphere all seem to be suited to being reproduced in this analogue way.

"Max Marchini recorded and produced the concert in Piacenza and, together with Max, I restored the Manticore Records label for production and distribution of high-quality vinyl recordings."

WRITER OF THE YEAR

Long Live Vinyl's Gareth Murphy was crowned Writer Of The Year at the PPA Independent Publisher Awards ceremony. Gareth wowed the judges with his cover features on The Beatles, David Bowie, punk and the vinyl revolution. Our Issue 4 *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* collector's-edition cover was also nominated for the Front Cover Of The Year award.

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LONG LIVE VINYL GEAR OF THE YEAR HIGHLY COMMENDED 2017

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The Story Behind The Sleeve

#9 Cheap Thrills

Big Brother & The Holding Company

The third-eye-popping artwork instantly ties Big Brother & The Holding Company's 1968 studio album – the acid-rockers' last to feature vocal powerhouse and priestess of the counterculture, Janis Joplin – to its era. The singer had delivered an earth-shattering performance at the Monterey Pop Festival during the previous year's Summer Of Love, and there was huge expectation riding on the release of the band's major-label debut on Columbia.

The group had planned to use a cover photo featuring them naked in bed together, but when the idea was rejected by the label, Joplin commissioned cartoonist Robert Crumb, the instigator and leading light of the none-more-Haight-Ashbury Underground Comix movement, to deliver the illustration. Crumb was reportedly paid $600 for the piece, which he finished in a single amphetamine-fuelled all-nighter. Originally intended as the back cover, Joplin loved the art so much, she insisted it took centre stage instead of an image of her.

Now Spinning

Enjoy the 12 essential tracks on *Long Live Vinyl*'s office record player this issue with our companion beer, the Island Records Session IPA, a fruity hop explosion from a legendary record label…

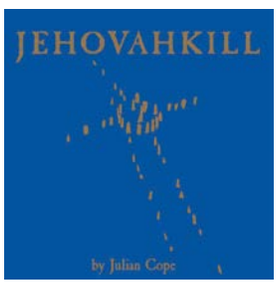
1 Disorder – Joy Division (Factory)
2 Wasn't Born To Follow – The Byrds (Columbia)
3 Rumer – Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band (Violette)
4 Sketch For Summer – The Durutti Column (Factory)
5 Higher Ground – Stevie Wonder (Motown)
6 Day Comes – G. Wayne Thomas (Anthology)
7 Hot Snakes – Plenty For All (Swami)
8 To Live A Life – First Aid Kit (Columbia)
9 Dead In The Water – Calexico (City Slang)
10 Ty Segall – Every1's A Winner (Drag City)
11 Haunted Ground – Dub Syndicate (On-U Sound)
12 You Send Me – Otis Redding (Rhino)

The Beast Re-released

The first David Bowie reissue of 2018 arrives on 5 January. It's the latest in Parlophone's line of 40th-anniversary picture discs and, this time, it's *Beauty And The Beast*, originally released on 6 January 1978 as the second single from *"Heroes"*. Recorded at Hansa Studios in Berlin, it features Robert Fripp's guitar and, on the B-side, there's a previously unreleased live version of the *"Heroes"* album cut *Blackout*. Replacing the single's original B-side of *Sense Of Doubt*, *Blackout* was recorded on 16 May 1978 at the Deutschlandhalle in Berlin during the ISOLAR II tour. Masayoshi Sukita provides the photos for the picture disc. Look out for a picture-disc reissue of *Low*'s *Breaking Glass* later this year.

ALTERNATIVE 90S

Universal dig into alternative 80s and 90s pop with vinyl reissues of four Julian Cope LPs, The Housemartins' *London 0 Hull 4* and The Beautiful South's *Welcome To The Beautiful South*. They're out on 26 January, as is a double-vinyl reissue of FSOL's *Lifeforms*.



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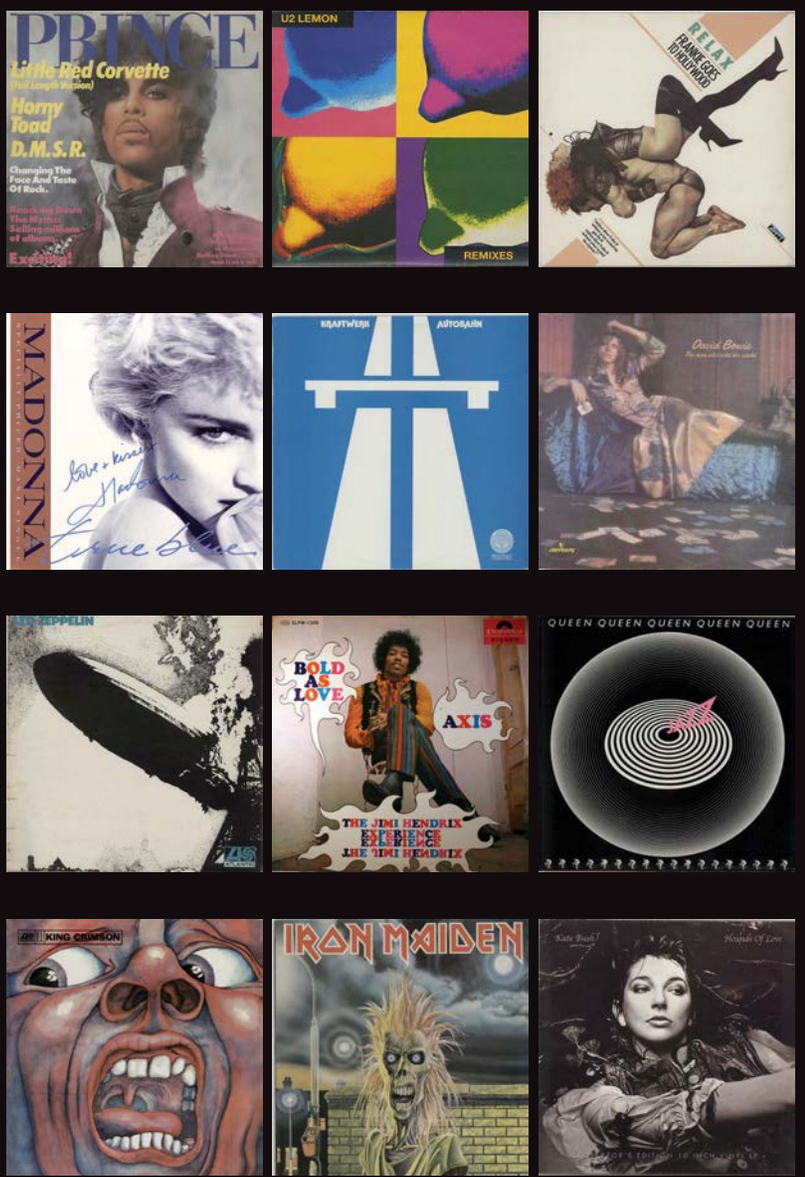

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On the Radar

SON LUX

Personal tragedy and politics collide on new LP *Brighter Wounds*

Son Lux's fifth record, *Brighter Wounds*, sees Ryan Lott, the project's lead protagonist and creative director, dealing intensely in matters of hope and despair. The film-score composer and musician rarely writes through an autobiographical lens but, since the winter of 2016, the experiences of his personal life and the US political context he finds himself in have required a change of focus.

Lott has subsequently become a father and lost a dear friend to cancer. These epochal moments – and their deep emotional pressures – have expelled an eruption of creativity, manifesting itself as *Brighter Wounds*; an exceedingly honest, touching and erudite record. Tragically, the unbridled joy of fatherhood has been mirrored equally by the "most difficult time" of his life and a deep sense of despair; the loss of a best friend. "Watching one life slip away and one coming over the horizon is a strange juxtaposition of extreme feelings," he says, and that mixture of joy and pain is acutely amplified with quizzical dismay for a future in America under Donald Trump: "I already feel this impulse to flee."

Ryan discovered that the only way to write about these conflicting emotions honestly was to do so autobiographically. "It would have felt like I was eluding reality to the point of dishonesty not to just express what I was feeling," he says.

Although Son Lux is Lott's brainchild and former solo project, *Brighter Wounds* is the second record as a trio with his bandmates Rafiq Bhatia and Ian Chang. With Lott now located in Los Angeles and Bhatia and Chang both in New York, they had to build ideas and write remotely on opposite sides of America, before an 11-day residency in a Manhattan studio.

With all three members having personal projects independent of Son Lux, technology has made this way of working not only possible, but welcomed. Ryan says, when asked how this way of creation can work coherently, that because "there's a steady flow of creativity amongst us all… being separate wasn't cumbersome", continuing that: "In fact, there's something sacred about working in a solitary way."

How the record sounds pressed on wax has been the subject of much thought – provoked when they had to approve the test pressing. "It was the first time we'd sat down together to listen to the record, which is crazy," Lott says. "Literally the first time we listened to it together was on vinyl. It was amazing. I haven't had an experience like this with a Son Lux record in the past, which is that the Side A, Side B experience showed me that the record really is in two parts. On vinyl, it feels so natural to breathe and turn. Something about it made me hear the back half of the record in a fresh way and I love it… There's something about vinyl that I love, which is that it's just as easy to start at the back as it is to start at the front." ● ***Sam Willis***

CRATE DIGGING WITH... DJ food

Strictly Kev – aka Kevin Foakes and Openmind – is a prolific artist and graphic designer. He's worked with Ninja Tune since 1993, designing covers, mixing radio shows and producing, as well as DJing under the DJ Food moniker. We venture into his extensive collection to dig out 10 records that have been influential to his musical and visual style…

MALCOLM MCLAREN
DUCK ROCK LP

"An unrepeatable clash of cultures, music, art and fashion. An aligning of elements whose shockwaves would be felt for decades. The record that brought hip-hop to the UK and saw the beginnings of the Art Of Noise."

COLDCUT
BEATS + PIECES 12"

"Matt Black and Jonathan More's killer dancefloor breakbeat-fest of rare funk and not-so-rare rock. They'd then go on to reinvent the remix via their Seven Minutes of Madness workout of Eric B. & Rakim's *Paid In Full*."

ADAM AND THE ANTZ
ZERØX 7"

"The first vinyl record I ever bought, it still sends chills down my spine every time I hear it. A post-punk classic from a time when the term didn't exist, and Adam had yet to discover the Burundi beat."

THE THE
INFECTED LP

"Matt Johnson's second The The LP [pictured here with the limited-edition 'torture' sleeve]. Unsurpassable pop with a serious message and the hedonistic playfulness of a young artist working without limitations."

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
RELAX 7"

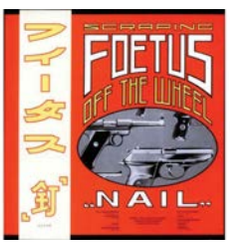
"The ultimate debut pop single. That cover, that bassline, that video, all those remixes. I played it to death, then I played it again. I'd even listen to the left and right hard-panned channels of the B-side."

THE HUMAN LEAGUE
LOVE AND DANCING LP

"One of the first remix albums, and superior to *Dare* to my ears. Not a second wasted, this was one of the first times I ever heard tape edits being used to repeat tiny sections of a song."

KRAFTWERK
COMPUTER WORLD LP

"It's hard to pick a favourite, but there has to be one in the list. *Computer World* was the current album release when I first got into the band, so it's always felt like the one where I discovered them."



SCRAPING FOETUS OFF THE WHEEL
NAIL LP

"Opening with a symphony and ending with a droning lock groove, J.G. Thirlwell takes sampling to a new place, using multiple personalities to deliver his vocals. Maybe his masterpiece…"

BRIAN ENO & DAVID BYRNE
MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS LP

"This could've only been made within a small window in time. Two artists at the height of their powers create an eerie, undiscovered place, never to be repeated."

THE KLF
CHILL OUT LP

"A sonic road trip where Jimmy Cauty and Bill Drummond abandon sample-heavy pop or club anthems and produce a continuous ambient collage. Perfectly pitched throughout, with moments of true beauty, it bears repeated listens." ●

IAN PEEL'S LINER NOTES

As *Long Live Vinyl* heads towards its first anniversary as a monthly, I'll celebrate by writing about the vinyl world's aspirational pinnacle – the music-lover's equivalent of the extra-special birthday present, the boxset

My most coveted boxset is one I've had very few occasions to even see 'in the flesh', let alone buy. John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 1969 *Wedding Album* was conceived from the outset as a boxset, with the extra parts and inserts playing an as-important role as the music. Designer John Kosh – who had worked with The Beatles on the sleeves for *Abbey Road* and *Let It Be* – took the duo's far-out soundscapes and married them, literally, to a collection of wedding photos, a series of Lennon's drawings, a 2D slice of wedding cake, a reproduction of the couple's marriage certificate and a *Bagism* bag, to sit inside while you listened, looked and read.

In the 70s, artists continued to use the boxset as a means of expression and brand extension. The first one I ever bought was The Alan Parsons Project's 1981 compendium of their first four Mercury albums: *I Robot*, *Pyramid*, *Eve* and *The Turn of A Friendly Card*. There was no extra music, because the era of 'bonus tracks' was way off in the future. Instead, each of the sleeves of the first three LPs was reimagined in the style of the fourth.

In the 80s, boxsets became a marketing device. Rather than a career overview or artistic statement, they were a great way for labels to hype singles higher into the charts. Witness the countless 7" boxsets of failed pop songs adding nothing more than a free badge or a sticker. Occasionally, though, there was a perfect fusion of marketing budget, artistic intent and design genius. Ticking all three of these boxes was the 7" edition of Scritti Politti's 1988 single *Oh Patti (Don't Feel Sorry For Loverboy)*. On the record, Miles Davis makes a guest appearance. In the box, designer Keith Breeden takes his elaborate sleeve and extrapolates it across postcards and even a sheet of stamps.

As for the 90s? There was a notion that a boxset came at the end of a career. It was an artist's tombstone, after which nothing more of creative value could or would ever be produced. And this was summed up perfectly by the Barenaked Ladies on the song *Box Set* from their debut album, *Gordon*. It's a bittersweet love letter to the format, as Steven Page talks through every stage of a failing career, disc by disc: "Disc One, it's where we've begun, it's all my greatest hits/ And if you are a fan then you know that you've already got 'em/ Disc Two, it was all brand new, an album's worth of songs/ But we had to leave the whole disc blank 'cause some other label bought 'em."

He goes on! "Disc Four, never released before/ Disc Five, I was barely alive/ Disc Six, a dance remix." It's a great song, and well worth three minutes of any vinyl lover's time as the soundtrack to this most absorbing of formats. ●

"As for the 90s? There was a notion that a boxset came at the end of a career. It was an artist's tombstone, after which nothing more of creative value could or would ever be produced"

Vinyl And Cocktails

Boisdale, the Mayfair club that boasts Jools Holland as its patron of music, has launched a new venue, The Vinyl & Cocktail Bar. Founder Ranald Macdonald's personal record collection adorns the walls, taking in "the golden age of jazz and rock 'n' roll through to the magical eclecticism and experimentation of the 60s and 70s". On the audio side, Devialet Phantom have provided a high-end wireless speaker set, and when you order your cocktails, you point at an album on the display wall to have it played.

STONES GET PLATTERED

Turntable manufacturers Pro-Ject have followed up their limited-edition Beatles and George Harrison-branded decks with a Rolling Stones release. It's essentially Pro-Ject's Debut III turntable branded with sleeve designer John Pasche's classic Tongue And Lips logo. Both the Debut III and the Stones edition feature an MDF plinth, decoupling feet, a metal platter and an Ortofon OM 10 cartridge. Pro-Ject describe it as a "wonderful collaboration with the longest active band in the world", and it will be available in a black and a white finish, for just over £300.

YOUR MOST VALUABLE VINYL

INXS

KICK PICTURE DISC

1987 UK limited-edition 12-track picture disc, replicating the original album's artwork. Copies of these are now fetching around £30 in mint condition.

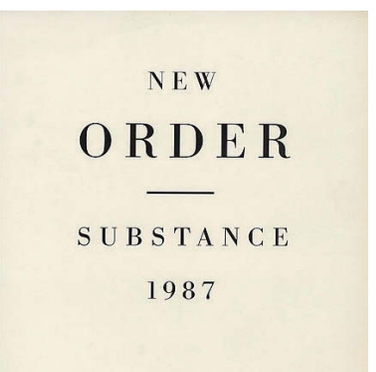
£30

HAPPY MONDAYS

PILLS 'N' THRILLS AND BELLYACHES

1990 UK first-edition Factory label 10-track vinyl LP, including *Loose Fit* and *Kinky Afro*, complete with illustrated credits inner along with the glossy picture sleeve featuring US candy-company logos, which was later withdrawn (FACT 320).

£45



NEW ORDER

SUBSTANCE

1987 UK Factory-label 12-track double-vinyl LP, housed in the first-edition embossed sleeve with glossy picture inners. A great collection of the band's singles, including *Ceremony*, *Temptation*, *Thieves Like Us* and *Blue Monday*, released in their 12" forms with various B-side tracks (FACT 200).

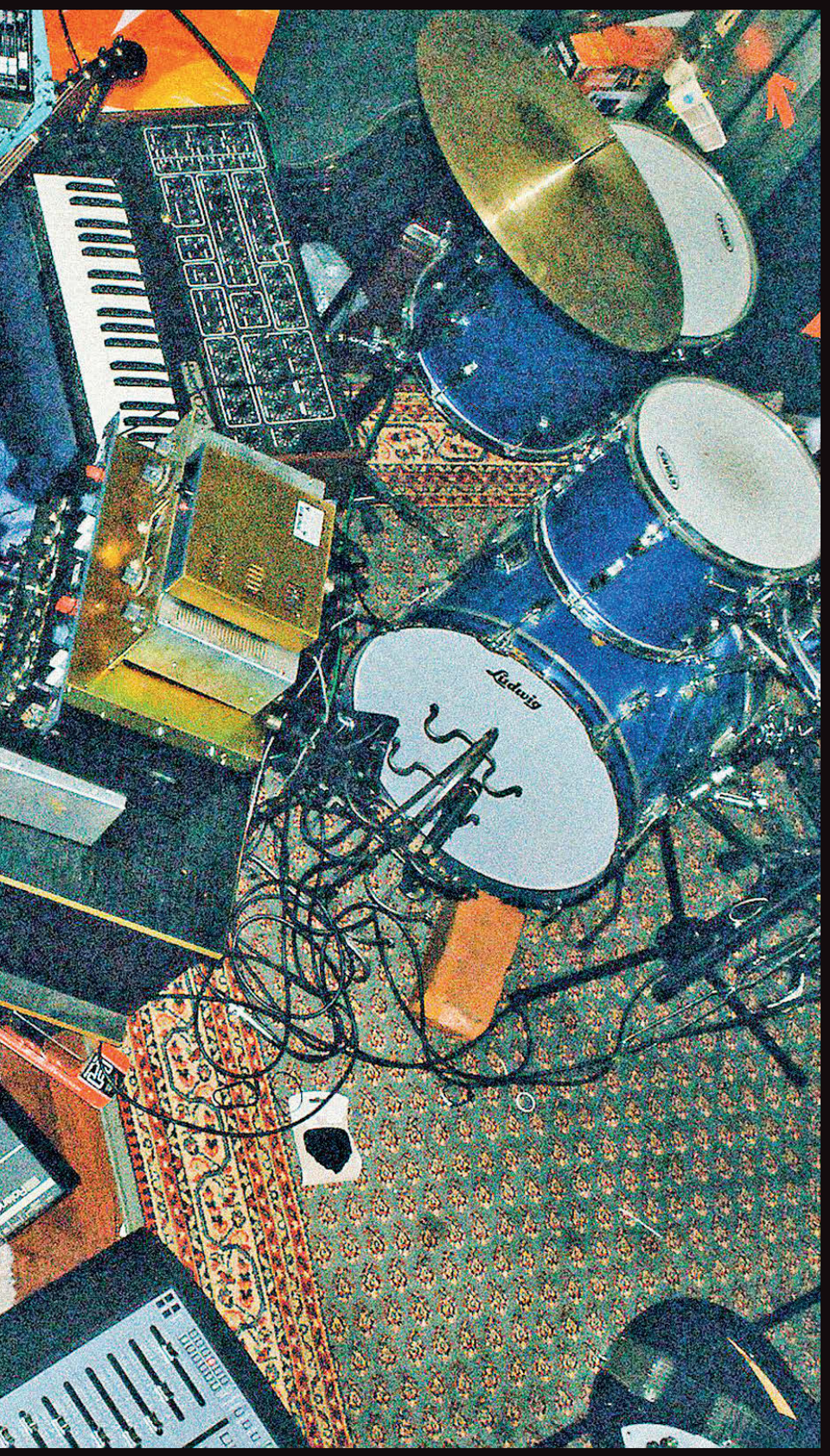
£75

JOY DIVISION

STILL

Rare original 1981 UK limited-edition 20-track Factory-label double LP, housed in a special embossed hessian hardbound sleeve, complete with ribbon and grey die-cut inner sleeves (FACT 40).

£125



STUDIO
SNAPSHOT

TAME IMPALA

Home studio, Perth, 2012

Tame Impala's Kevin Parker used a crop of this shot for the back cover of his 2012 breakthrough record, *Lonerism*. The album evolved the soundscape of his debut, *Innerspeaker*, taking songs draped in the familiar finery of psychedelic rock and immersing them in a haze of synths, found-sound recordings and effects – creating what he's described as "sugar-pop that's been sent to outer space and back".

The album was the result of two years of intense trial-and-error sonic experimentation in Parker's home studio in Perth. The image of the archetypal figure of the musician lost in the flow of creation not only works as powerful visual shorthand for the album's title and themes, but also conjures up feelings familiar to producers and musicians everywhere – of being holed up in a remote location and somehow absent from the 'real' world, surrounded by the tools of their trade, in pursuit of the sound in their head.

Getty

ANY

BYRDS

Half a century ago, The Byrds released *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*, their fifth album and a psychedelic masterwork. **Sean Egan** speaks to Roger McGuinn about its troubled creation throughout 1967, a tumultuous year in music…

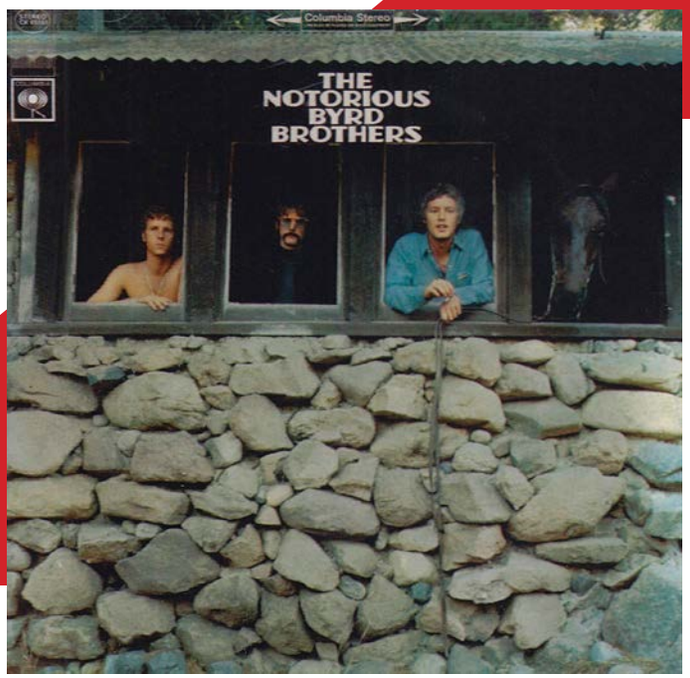
"He was hanging out with George Harrison, and George had told him that the London Philharmonic weren't good [enough] musicians to be playing with The Beatles. David took that, and we were at rehearsal one time and he shouted at me: 'Well, you're not a good enough musician to be playing with me!'"

Roger McGuinn is recalling the poisonous and chaotic scenes surrounding The Byrds' attempts to record their fifth album in 1967. The Los Angeles ensemble had already had to deal with losing their main songwriter, Gene Clark, the previous year. Not only would aforementioned guitarist David Crosby not finish the sessions, but the departure of drummer Michael Clarke would reduce the band to a duo by the time of the record's release. This fragmentation would only seem to compound the issue of the band's commercial freefall: their last half-dozen singles had flopped. From this chaos, though, a classic album miraculously emerged. *The Notorious Byrd Brothers,* released in January 1968, is widely considered the band's masterpiece.

As the new album developed at Columbia Studios, Hollywood from June 1967, Crosby's was an increasingly fractious presence, complaining bitterly that his songs *Lady Friend* (a July single) and *Triad* (a then-risqué celebration of a *ménage à trois*) were being overlooked in favour of regressive Goffin and King covers. For The Byrds' main vocalist and lead guitarist McGuinn, though, any grievance was a side issue to the fact of Crosby being increasingly discontented within the band's setup and susceptible to the entreaties of Stephen Stills, with whom he would ultimately team up in Crosby, Stills & Nash.

In October '67, McGuinn and bassist Chris Hillman – the other Byrds mainstay – decided to give Crosby what they considered his wish. "It was a firing," McGuinn states. "Chris and I went up to his house. I said: 'Sit down, David, we want ▶

Roger McGuinn



The album cover, with its notorious equine substitution

to talk to you. We really can't work with you anymore'. He said: 'Oh, but we could make great music together'. I said: 'We can make good music without you.'" Did he regret that The Byrds' distinctive ethereal harmonies, of which Crosby's voice was a crucial component, were gone forever? "Unfortunately, not at the time, but I missed it later," he admits.

McGuinn's initial equanimity may have had something to do with the fact that plans were soon afoot to recruit someone who, at first, seemed the perfect replacement. The primary reason for original Byrd Gene Clark leaving the band was his hatred of flying, but friction between him and Crosby was also a factor. With a subsequent solo career having not taken off, Clark was amenable to rejoining the newly Crosby-less ensemble. Not only would he be able to fill in the missing part of the harmony sound, but he could more than buttress the writing side, as proven by the fact that his piledriving *I'll Feel A Whole Lot Better* remains the favourite Byrds song of many of the group's fans to this day.

Unfortunately, Clark's return was both brief and disastrous. "I don't remember him being at these sessions," McGuinn shrugs. "I guess he was, but I don't know what he did. I remember the three weeks he was on the road with us and he was a nervous wreck. He flew out to the Midwest, but he couldn't fly back – he took a train back to LA." This made Clark's renewed membership untenable. McGuinn: "He left voluntarily."

MOOG LANDING

McGuinn and Hillman now had no option but to draft in sessioneers to complete the album. Among them were pedal-steel maestro Red Rhodes and Clarence White, a man with a larger-than-life guitar sound who would later join the band permanently. However, there remained the problem of Michael Clarke, who was as dissatisfied as Crosby. The drummer's ability was once considered less important than his teen-idol looks, but the *Notorious…* sessions saw the band frustrated by his efforts. Clarke didn't help by responding in these arguments – captured on tape – that he was only staying in the group for the money.

In his absence, the drum stool was filled by ace studio men Hal Blaine and Jim Gordon. Although Clarke did return to the sessions, and is pictured on the LP sleeve, after the album's completion he was told his services were no longer required. "He wanted to be in a blues band like The Rolling Stones," McGuinn avers. "He liked blues better than what we were doing."

Clarke would presumably not have approved, therefore, of the presence of Moog synthesisers on the album. McGuinn was introduced to then-nascent technology by musician Paul Beaver at the Monterey Pop Festival. He explains: "I asked him if it was possible to emulate any musical instrument with this machine, and he said it was. So I bought one for a mere $9,000. Adjusted for inflation, I don't know what that would be [over $66,000, in fact]. I played around with it. There was no instruction manual, because Mr Moog felt that if you owned one and didn't know how to work it, you didn't deserve to have it."

In their quest to wrest great art from anarchy, McGuinn acknowledges that he and Hillman were helped in no small measure by producer Gary Usher. He was The Byrds' third producer, but the first who was willing and able to fulfil the band's increasingly grand sonic visions, most of which were inspired by The Beatles' recent innovations in the studio. "Gary Usher was a spark plug," says McGuinn. "He was a

THE BAND'S GRAND SONIC VISIONS WERE INSPIRED BY THE BEATLES' RECENT STUDIO WORK

David Crosby and Roger McGuinn performing at the Monterey Pop Festival in June 1967

Getty

techie and he was into all the flanging and phasing and backward tapes." He also says: "He was responsible for the fluidity of it," a reference to how the *Notorious…* tracks were mixed to meld into one another. The combination of the overall sonic tranquillity and the segues created the impression of a conceptual suite, conferring a cohesiveness that belied the disjointed feel of the sessions, as well as distracting from the album's running time of less than half an hour.

The album opens with *Artificial Energy*, a tale of drug mania and murder set to a marching beat and propelled by a regal brass section. "Both Chris and I were high on amphetamine when we wrote the song," says McGuinn (Michael Clarke also gets a co-writing credit). He claims that those who perceive the speeding narrator as anti-homosexual because of his choice of victim are off-beam: "It's not a queen, it's the Queen. Of England. It's been misinterpreted for all these years." He concedes the relevant line is grafted on a little: "It just rhymed."

"They were presented to us," says McGuinn, vaguely, of Gerry Goffin and Carole King's *Goin' Back* and *Wasn't Born To Follow*. "Gary Usher probably liked them." While turning to the product of a Tin Pan Alley songwriting team could be considered a retrograde step for such a hip and self-reliant group, the songs' inclusion typified the serendipity that blessed this album. Spiritually, the songs gelled perfectly with their surroundings. In its message that their lack of malice gives children greater wisdom, *Goin' Back* (one of the few tracks on which McGuinn's trademark 12-string Rickenbacker guitar work is prominent) was absolutely in keeping with the hippie belief that 'elders and betters' had made a mess of the world. Although *Goin' Back* was familiar as a hit via Dusty Springfield, *Wasn't Born To Follow* was unknown to the public. Perhaps in its unadorned state a rather unassertive rebel anthem, when married by The Byrds to soaring phasing effects, it came to seem so much in tune with the revolutionary zeitgeist that it featured prominently in counterculture road movie *Easy Rider*. It's also the closest thing to a signature song on an album whose other tracks tend to be of a piece.

PSYCHEDELIC DREAMSCAPE

On *Notorious…*, Chris Hillman continued the process of coming into his own as a writer that had begun with Gene Clark's departure. The bassist was the sole composer of *Natural Harmony*, whose mysterious tone, communitarian message and far-out effects make it a microcosm of the entire album. A staccato yearning for reunion delivered in McGuinn's famously quavering voice, original Side One closer *Get To You* has provoked much speculation about its subject. Some think it refers to a city – London – rather than a person. "That's fine," McGuinn says. "You shouldn't have to explain songs to people. Let them think what they want." One thing he is prepared to be forthcoming about establishes the track as the only substantial legacy of Gene Clark's fleeting return to the band. "Gene and I wrote it. Chris got the credit for it somehow."

Illustrative of why this restful album paradoxically never quite sounds mellow, the dreamy words and gossamer harmonies of Side Two opener *Change Is Now* (Hillman/McGuinn) are counterpointed dramatically by gale-force guitar work.

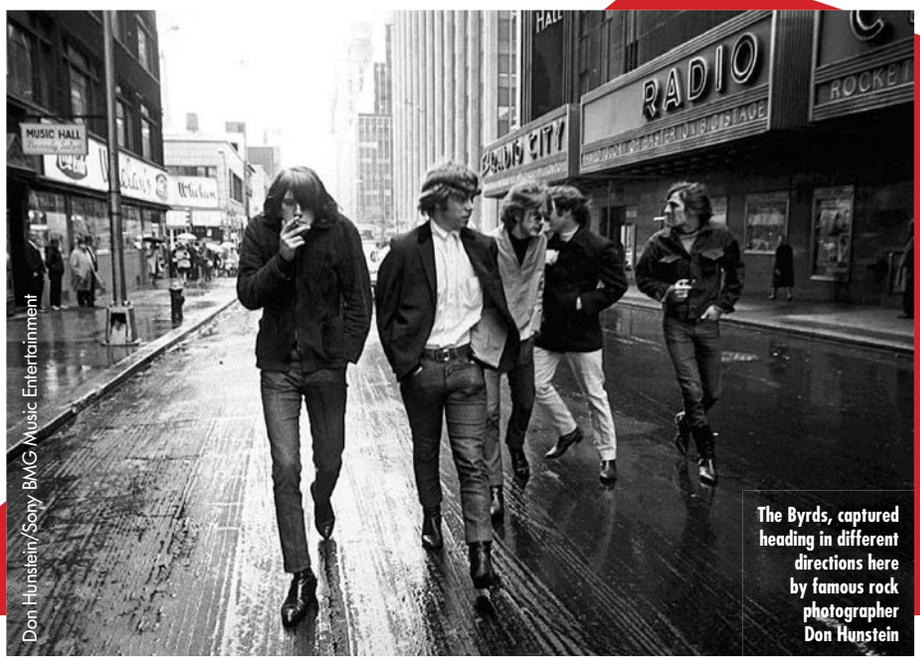
Don Hunstein /Sony BMG Music Entertainment

Above: The Byrds in 1965 (l to r): David Crosby, Gene Clark, Michael Clarke, Chris Hillman and McGuinn (then known as Jim)

THE ALBUM ART

The album's name was a nod to the phraseology of old Wild West 'Wanted' posters. It was the first Byrds title unrelated to the record's contents, tying in only to the Guy Webster photo session with horses that led to the picture on the front of the sleeve. Crosby was aggrieved that an equine face appeared in place of his. McGuinn claims there was no insult intended, but does grudgingly admit that Crosby might have been done an injustice by not being represented on the sleeve of an album he was much more involved with than many realise. "It didn't seem like something we wanted to do at the time," he sniffs. Although memorable, the sleeve had a rural flavour that in no way represented the album's space-age contents. McGuinn notes: "I'm not even sure how much control we had over the cover. The Columbia art department did things that they'd present to us."

The album's Wild West imagery was unrelated to its musical style and lyrical themes



Don Hunstein/Sony BMG Music Entertainment

The Byrds, captured heading in different directions here by famous rock photographer Don Hunstein

NOTORIOUS ON VINYL

The Notorious Byrd Brothers is readily available on vinyl. Sony Music Canada reissued the LP on 180-gram vinyl in 2012, while the Sundazed label has recently made the mono version available on wax after a gap of 40 years. McGuinn perceives vinyl as superior to digital formats, even if he couches it more in intellectual than aesthetic terms: "Because I'm into technology, I know vinyl does have some quality that digital doesn't have. Digital is like a fluorescent light – it's really not on all the time, it's just vibrating at a higher frequency. Whereas analogue is always on. It's like a warmth that you get from analogue that you don't get from digital." He adds: "What's funny is there are people making vinyl out of digital recordings and of course, it doesn't improve the original recording when you put it on vinyl. You have to go back to 30-inch-per-second magnetic tape to get that sound."

"I found this Philips record player that was in the dumpster," McGuinn explains. "The amplifier was in good condition. So I removed it, put it in a cigar box and put a little three-inch walkie-talkie speaker in the cigar box with it. I plugged my guitar into it and, man, that thing sustained forever."

The soundscape of *Notorious…* may be generally modernistic and urban, but in many places, rustic licks incongruously – but intriguingly – bob to the surface. The only full-on country number, though, is *Old John Robertson* (Hillman/McGuinn). The song is based on an odd character who traversed Hillman's tiny childhood hometown in San Diego County. Not even the overdubbed four-piece cello group is immune from the enthusiasm for effects, their antediluvian strains soaked in phasing.

The remaining Byrds were happy to – or perhaps couldn't afford not to – use some of the songs Crosby left behind, and ironically, it's the three Crosby co-writes which do so much to grant the album an alternately beatific and dissident feel in tune with the mood of the year of its release. Unable to remember all the lyrics of his *Draft Morning*, McGuinn and Hillman filled in the blanks (somewhat to Crosby's disgust, giving themselves a co-writing credit in the process). Although the song is far from strident, it acutely addresses a dread for many young American males during the Vietnam War. *Tribal Gathering* (Crosby/Hillman) celebrates one of the era's numerous love-ins.

Crosby may possibly have been the most belligerent hippie ever conceived of, but his lyric here is quintessential Summer Of Love stuff as it portrays Macedonians, pilots, Hell's Angels and pretty girls congregating in sandalwood-scented concord. Although each verse is capped by soothing Byrds harmonies, cooing: "Strange thing, gathering of tribes," the guitar in the instrumental sections is once more discordant and distorted. *Dolphin's Smile* (Crosby/Hillman/McGuinn) is serene, celebrating the escape from pressure and mundanity offered by a lengthy sea excursion. The bubbles effect at the beginning, incidentally, is not water, but the ingenious sound of McGuinn's fingernails on the neck of his guitar.

A common complaint about The Byrds was they'd slightly tarnish a great album by ending it on a whimsical or jokey note. *Notorious…* cheerfully upholds this tradition thanks to *Space Odyssey*, a collaboration between McGuinn and his friend Robert J. Hippard. It marries an olde-worlde Celtic melody to the LP's most futuristic instrumentation yet, underpinned by the sound of the Moog, which is barely discernible elsewhere, but is omnipresent here in all its doomy, one-note glory.

THE MOOG IS OMNIPRESENT ON SPACE ODYSSEY IN ALL ITS DOOMY, ONE-NOTE GLORY

The critics of the new counterculture magazines such as *Crawdaddy* and *Rolling Stone* showered *The Notorious Byrd Brothers* with hosannas which bolstered the widely held view that The Byrds were titans on a par with The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. For a long time, though, McGuinn's perception of the album was polluted by the fact that it did not rescue The Byrds from their downward career trajectory. Once again, innovation and artistic development were met heartbreakingly with declining sales. Loyal British fans sent it to No. 12, but in the States, the album could only scrape a position of 47. Additionally, it achieved the dubious milestone of being the first Byrds LP to fail to yield a US Top 40 single.

Decades of retrospection and the satisfaction of seeing it regularly appear in critics' greatest-albums polls have since enabled McGuinn to properly evaluate the work's merits. The Byrds released 12 albums in all; several of them – both before and after this one – hailed as classics. Yet today, McGuinn is able to say of *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*: "I think it's my favourite." ●

[PIAS] ACTION PRESTON • BADLANDS CHELTENHAM • BANQUET KINGSTON • BEATDOWN NEWCASTLE • BLACK CIRCLE LEIGHTON BUZZARD • BLACKEST RAINBOW SHEFFIELD • CASBAH GREENWICH • CODA PHONICA LONDON • POLAR BEAR BIRMINGHAM • PROBE LIVERPOOL • RAPTURE WITNEY • RAVES FROM THE GRAVE FROME • RECORD CORNER GODALMING • REFLEX NEWCASTLE • RELEVANT CAMBRIDGE • RESIDENT BRIGHTON • ROLLERCOASTER KILKENNY • ROUGH TRADE BRISTOL • ROUGH TRADE LONDON • ROUGH TRADE NOTTINGHAM • SEISMIC LEAMINGTON SPA • SISTER RAY LONDON • SLIDE BEDFORD • SOUNDCLASH NORWICH • SOUND IT OUT MUSIC EDINBURGH • COOL DISC DERRY • CRASH LEEDS • CULT HERO BRIGHTON • DAVID'S LETCHWORTH • DIVERSE MUSIC NEWPORT • DRIFT TOTNES • EARWORM YORK • ELEPHANT WINCHESTER • EMPIRE ST ALBANS • FIVES LEIGH ON SEA • FOREVER RECORDS NOTTINGHAM • FREEBIRD DUBLIN • FRIENDLY BRISTOL • GATEFIELD SOUNDS WHITSTABLE • HONEST JONS LONDON • HOT SALVATION FOLKESTONE • JAM FALMOUTH • JUMBO LEEDS • LEFT FOR DEAD SHREWSBURY • LOST IN VINYL CAMBRIDGE • MOLD RECORD SHOP MOLD •MONORAIL GLASGOW • MUSIC NOT DEAD BEXHILL ON SEA • NIGHTFLY RECORDS UXBRIDGE • NORMANS LEEDS • PEBBLE EASTBOURNE • PICCADILLY MANCHESTER • PIE & VINYL SOUTHSEA ESTERFILED • TOWER DUBLIN • TRANSMISSION MARGATE • TRUCK STORE OXFORD • UNDERGROUND SOLUTION EDINBURGH • VENUS VINYL LONDON • VINYL COLLECTORS SALISBURY • VINYL HUNTER BURY ST EDMUNDS • WAH WAH RECORDS WAKEFIELD T STOCKTON ON TEES • SOUND KNOWLEDGE MALBOROUGH • SOUNDS OF THE UNIVERSE LONDON • SOUTH SOUTHEND • SPILLERS CARDIFF • SPINDIZZY DUBLIN • SWORDFISH BIRMINGHAM • TALLBIRD CHELTENHAM

XYLOURIS WHITE
MOTHER
Bella Union

ROY HARPER
HQ
Science Friction

KATE TEMPEST
BRAND NEW ANCIENTS
Gearbox Records

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB
WRONG CREATURES
Coop

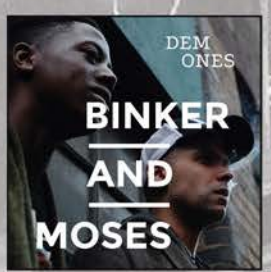
THE GO! TEAM
SEMICIRCLE
Memphis Industries

JIM JAMES
TRIBUTE TO 2
ATO

SOUL JAZZ RECORDS PRESENTS
DEUTSCHE ELEKTRONISCHE MUSIC 3
Soul Jazz

LANKUM
BETWEEN THE EARTH AND SKY
Rough Trade

GARY NUMAN
DANCE
Beggars Banquet



BINKER AND MOSES
DEM ONES
Gearbox Records

TUNE- YARDS
I CAN FEEL YOU CREEP
INTO MY PRIVATE LIFE
4AD

VARIOUS ARTISTS
CRAZY HEART
New West Records

SOUNDS OF THE UNIVERSE

HEAD MUSIC

With acclaimed album *Adiós Señor Pussycat* released in October, Michael Head tells **Richard Purden** how he spent his Liverpool childhood honing his craft while immersed in a music scene that revolved around vinyl…

The Florence Institute stands tall in all its Victorian splendour on a South Liverpool street corner. Known locally as The Florrie, the Grade II listed building has served the community since 1889. Built to accommodate working and unemployed young men, it fell into neglect in the 1980s during the city's most turbulent time of the post-war period. It re-emerged after a local campaign to save and organise the building for future generations. "My daughter's aunt helped resurrect this place," says Michael Head, with some pride; and on the inner sleeve of his latest solo album, *Adiós Señor Pussycat*, he's photographed wearing a God Save The Florrie T-shirt redesigned by Sex Pistols cover artist Jamie Reid. Having played benefit gigs in the past for the community building, it's a place close to Head's heart – and it's here we meet on a mild November afternoon.

As the frontman and chief songwriter of The Pale Fountains, Shack and Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band, the latter more of a collective of musicians rather than a solid line-up, he is one of the most respected songwriters in British music, with the likes of Ian Brown, Richard Hawley, Pete Townshend and Noel Gallagher all citing his genius. Head's sporadic gigs across Britain attract ardent followers, and include songs gathered over a 35-year period steeped in mythology and chaos. His drugs and booze problems are well documented, but today, the songwriter cuts a lean and alert figure in an ex-army parka and blue denims. He greets all in his wake with a hug, while enjoying a newfound sobriety.

Speaking in soft Scouse tones, Head remembers his Teddy Boy father's record collection growing up in Kensington, an inner-city area of Liverpool known colloquially as Kenny. "There wasn't a lot of Teddy Boy 50s music around the house, it was more country and western," he says. "Johnny Cash, Hank Williams, Hank Locklin and Jim Reeves – all good songs. My ma liked the crooners – Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin.

"Around 1973, one Christmas, my dad bought me one of those four-track tape recorders with *Aladdin Sane*. I played it all the time. I liked English at school, so I loved the lyrics and the drama of the music. That unwittingly got me into songs and then it was the radio."

Head worked his way back, then forward with Bowie, who offered a passport to to the opposite sex and new adventures in vinyl. "He played a blinder. I got *Ziggy…* and then *Pin Ups*; a girl who lived in the estate got on my bus, I had a Bowie badge on and we started chatting – she got me into Roxy Music from there."

It wasn't long before Head was hanging around outside Probe Records, mingling with a variety of Liverpool scenesters. "We'd stand outside, it was a meeting place. I didn't buy many records before my first wage packet, which was around 1976."

COUNTER CULTURE

Behind the counter, Pete Burns, later of Dead Or Alive, was said to throw records at Probe's patrons if he disapproved of their purchases. "There was a myth that he was a bit scary, but I think he just put on the intimidation. I got to know him and he

LOVE
LOVE

SHACK ATTACK

A selection of highlights from Michael Head's solo career and much-loved former band, Shack…

Waterpistol 1995
Walter's Song was inspired by Walter Schumann's score for *The Night Of The Hunter*, and adapts *Dream Little One, Dream* from the film's credits. "If you wanted a soundtrack to be eerie, surreal, terrifying, beautiful and magical, then I think Walter Schumann and Charles Laughton [director] fucking nailed it."

H.M.S. Fable 1999
Head was on the *NME* cover and described as Britain's "greatest songwriter", but the LP didn't conquer the mainstream. "I think it's a great record," he says. "If it had been a big success and we took a different direction, our John might have crashed his yacht… But I was happy with our bit."

…The Corner Of Miles And Gil 2006
Previous album *Here's Tom With The Weather* was released on John Squire's North Country, while this was on Noel Gallagher's Sour Mash label. "We met at Glastonbury and got on really well," said Head. "He suggested putting the album out, we knew we could do something with him."

GOING SOLO

Michael Head & The Strands *The Magical World Of The Strands* 1997
Richard Hawley: "It's one of the most accomplished albums of British songwriting of all time." Producer Mark Coyle: "It didn't reflect anything at the time, it could have come from any era… The folk root of that album is music that's in the soul of everybody."

Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band *Adiós Señor Pussycat* 2017
While the Northern songwriting magus refrains from old temptations on this new album, his work remains as intangible and otherworldly as ever. *Rumer* displays Head's Burt Bacharach classic-pop sensibilities. In another era, it would have been a hit single.

was alright – admittedly, he seemed quite imposing as you approached the steps of the shop, but he was sound."

Probe provided a vital networking spot for local bands emerging from the post-punk era, among them The Teardrop Explodes and Echo & The Bunnymen. David Palmer, known as Yorkie, who would later join Space, provided practice space at his home for both bands, and would soon introduce Head to more avant-garde tastes. "Yorkie was trying to brainwash me," Head says. "Getting me to listen to fucking Faust and Pere Ubu. He'd be standing outside with his Probe bag, and on the bus home he would tell me of his doings of the day buying and selling records.

"Early doors, I knew what I liked. Love, Burt Bacharach, The Byrds, Velvets – that stuff wasn't on the table in Kenny. I started learning my craft with Love and The Beatles, then started experimenting. My musical intake became more diverse with Sérgio Mendes, Françoise Hardy and Herb Alpert. In the end, I was listening to Miles Davis and Stravinsky. I got more into classical chords, arrangements, middle eights and outros. Biffa (late Pale Fountains bassist Chris McCaffery) gave me a lot of confidence as a songwriter. I thought because I was mastering the chords, I could write anything, once I set my mind to a particular style."

SOLO FLIGHT

Adiós Señor Pussycat is Head's first solo album in 20 years and displays some of those early vinyl influences alongside the pastoral warmth of 1997's *The Magical World Of The Strands*. He admits that record "was heavily opium induced", while *Adiós Señor Pussycat* relied on a more natural state. Released on Head's own Violette label with the help of Matt Lockett, there's a sense of joy around the album – from the smiling picture on the cover to the enchanting collection of songs, among them *Working Family*, which was written over 20 years ago.

"I wrote that between *Zilch* and *Waterpistol*, I loved the song and the idea was like a short story. I couldn't get the second verse, it needed that 12-string Byrds treatment." A previous solo album was suspended due to reasons beyond his control. "I knew I had songs… the lad who owned the studio had personal problems, so I put them in a drawer. They don't go anywhere, I had new ideas with *Picasso* and *Winter Turns To Spring*… they're timeless to me, they never age."

After 11 long years since his last release with Shack, the exhilaration of seeing the finished work is tangible.

"When Matt sent me the album through the post, I thought, 'I'm going to cherish this.' Even through it was my album, it reminded me of when I was a kid buying *The Soft Parade* by The Doors and not taking the wrapper off. Sleeves are dead important; they catch your eye and represent what's inside. They were just as important as the music. History books will record how we started this disposable treatment of music, going from vinyl to CD and then having it on your phone. Being brought up with vinyl and loving vinyl, but not being as obsessed as some of my mates on the estate, this was a dream."

LOVE/SHACK

After being signed for £150,000 with The Pale Fountains in 1982, the band struggled to express their musical values in the climate of the era. "I remember our John asking for a backwards guitar sound in the studio, it was like we had asked for a blancmange." He points to another Scouse mystic in helping to create a cultural shift. "The La's did open a lot of doors for people in the studio, the labels and producers were very set in their ways. They just wanted to use the latest gadgets, whereas we all wanted to use the old amp in the corner."

Shack's second album, *Waterpistol*, is often described as their 'great lost work'. Although scheduled for release in 1991, the album was destroyed in a studio fire. When the master tapes were retrieved after being left behind in a hired car, it was eventually released in 1995. By that stage, the momentum in the band had ebbed away and Head had entered a heavily opiated stretch. "I brought it on myself," he admits. It's part of my life, like what school you went to. I had always been inquisitive and wanted to know all aspects of life."

A recent performance in Glasgow saw Head revisit songs from the much-treasured cult classic. "Musically, there was a lot of great, groundbreaking music around at the time, De La Soul, The Stone Roses, The La's and rave were all kicking in. The environment was right; we were listening to quite a bit of jazz while recording, which brought a freedom of expression to songs like *Stranger*. We never sat and planned that, it just turned into this freeform thing. I would say to the band: 'Get the ball and run with it, go nuts at the end.' We used a lot of jazz shortcuts to get what we wanted."

Head doesn't believe in the adage of not meeting your heroes, having crossed paths with Liverpool legend Bill Shankly in 1976. "He had the red shirt on and there was 150 lads shaking hands, I got mine right in there. He was like: 'Get the one at the back.'"

In the aftermath of the chaos around *Waterpistol*, troubles were left behind when Head and his brother John, guitarist in The Pale Fountains, Shack and The Strands, were asked to back Arthur Lee on a handful of European dates. "That was fucking brilliant, after the gig we were sharing a hotel room with Arthur. I'd look over and see him on the bed, it was very surreal. Arthur Lee was amazing, you couldn't write it. People go on about heroes, but I respect everything about him, in terms of the songs, and as a man." ●

> "SLEEVES ARE DEAD IMPORTANT; THEY CATCH YOUR EYE AND REPRESENT WHAT'S INSIDE. THEY WERE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE MUSIC"

Images: Alex Hurst

AT HOME WITH DON LETTS

He's spent the last 10 years presenting BBC Radio 6 Music's *Culture Clash* radio show and over the past four decades, has become known as one of the nation's most discerning vinyl collectors. **Jennifer Otter Bickerdike** meets the legendary Don…

Don Letts is a charismatic orator, intertwining pointed critiques of modern life with pragmatic truisms on the 'culturally thin' opening years of the 21st century. For this writer, one afternoon in his presence comes close to eclipsing three years of studying for my PhD in Cultural Studies. Take me to school any day, Mr Letts.

Stepping into his home studio is like visiting a carefully curated collection of great British music moments from the last four decades. From his record plaques commemorating the sales of classic albums by Big Audio Dynamite and Black Grape, to the low-key framed picture of Letts sharing a private moment with Bob Marley, it is impossible to not be awed by the breadth and depth of his personal (and continued) contributions to pop culture.

As the conversation rolls from Marx to Marvin Gaye and everything in between, Letts takes us on an eloquent journey, his life-long devotion to music the thread that binds it all together. His weekly BBC Radio 6 Music show, *Culture Clash*, showcases his personal new picks of the week, as well as featuring a 'Crucial Vinyl' segment, where he highlights a cherished piece from his own record collection.

2017 marked 10 years that Letts has been on BBC Radio 6. He wanted to commemorate the anniversary with a new LP, *Don Letts Presents Culture Clash Radio*, a sampling of his favourite cuts from the entire music spectrum. "I've done a few compilations over the years… They've always been genre-based, predominantly reggae. Someone said: 'I want you to do another one'. I thought about it; I didn't want to do another genre compilation. Everyone thinks 'Don Letts is reggae, or Don Letts is punk rock,' but that's not the sum total of me, any more than it is of anybody. The only people I know that listen to one kind of music are 10-year-olds. It was liberating in that I can be who I am, I can be me. I was particularly pleased with [the selection] because they were things that struck a chord with me in my formative years. There were things that people would never expect me to like. Things like the Bobby Goldsboro track, *Summer (The First Time)*. People are like: 'What the fuck is that, Don?' and I'm like: 'Hey. I'm not going to lie, that spoke to me.' You'll probably throw up when you hear it".

We arrived expecting Letts to have thousands of albums in his collection. "I'm one of those guys that had records all around his walls," he says. "I actually got rid of a lot of it when punk rock happened, stupidly. When ▶

post-punk happened, I frantically tried to get it all back, as we felt we could then be honest about what we really liked."

However, in the early 1990s, Letts was struck by a tragedy too horrific for many vinyl lovers to even contemplate. "I lost most of my record collection in a fire," he confides. "For about 10 to 15 years, when I would tell someone that, I'd get a shiver down my spine and get all depressed. It took me 25 years to get over it. It was like losing a member of the family. After that, I tried to start buying shit back, but it gets expensive. So now, it ain't about volume, it's about quality."

VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

It would be easy for Letts to revel in nostalgia, as he has been so closely involved with some of the biggest icons in popular culture. Yet he remains dedicated and enthusiastic about finding new music. "With the radio show… I could easily sit there and dip backwards and deal with just the tried and tested. But [with the show], I'm duty bound to embrace the new. It's kept me on my toes; every week, a quarter of the show is brand-new music. To find that every week, it's a bit of a task. To find 10 new tracks that I like and say: 'Here, listen to this,' is hard. But in all the madness, I do find moments of godlike genius that maybe no one else will ever hear – I get to play that on my show. It's worth those 200 records I've dumped to hear that one little thing. So much beautiful stuff slips underneath the radar and no one even knew it existed. Looking for new music is a big bonus. That's the one thing that keeps me young, if anything does; music really is the elixir of life. When you get stuck in your soundtrack, you get old."

Discussion turns to why vinyl matters now more than ever. "Vinyl is the building block and foundation of it all. The first 10 years of the 21st century, it was like everyone was in a creative, cultural coma. The nostalgia thing started because at the start of the millennium, people were scared to move forward, so they started looking backwards. I think things are beginning to change now; the economic, social, political landscape has forced things to change. Which is the way it normally works. Ultimately, I'm an optimist, I don't want to sound like: 'Oh, things were better in my day.' The best day is the one you are living in. But I wouldn't swap my musical and cultural journey for anything. I got the best of it. Being a product of the vinyl generation, you got to put it in the context of the time. It was very innocent.

"I've written sleeve notes where I tried to analyse why music was so important. The bottom line is that it was all we had, and it was affordable. It was alternative education through music. As much as it can entertain, it can also be a tool for social and personal growth. There's no doubt in my mind about that; music made me. It certainly influenced me.

"I've seen through various journeys that I've had how music can facilitate change. For example, when I DJ'd at the Roxy, the whole punky reggae party came through our respective cultures, and then other creativity came out of that. There weren't all these different ways you could access information and get inspiration. Invariably, music through vinyl records was the most affordable way you could access this gateway to new schools of thought, places, universes.

"There's a 'trend' aspect to vinyl; but because the 21st century is so

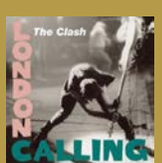
AT HOME WITH

DON'S TOP 6

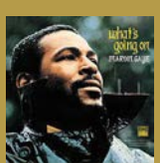
We tasked Don with recommending six LPs that should be in every collection. It was visibly difficult for him to narrow it down to just this shortlist (in no particular order)…

The Wailers
Catch A Fire

The Beach Boys
Pet Sounds



The Clash
London Calling



Marvin Gaye
What's Going On

Prince
Sign 'O' The Times

Public Enemy
It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back

culturally thin, I think young people are beginning to appreciate the gravitas and depth of vinyl. They're cultural touchstones, totems; that's got a lot to do with it.

"I've got a 25-year-old son. The other day he was listening to Isaac Hayes' *Hot Buttered Soul*. He said to me that he recognised that music was better in my time."

LISTEN IN THE MOMENT

"I thought that was so sad," Letts continues. "I've always said that every generation needs its own soundtrack. That's one other reason why vinyl is going to survive: because it has been so culturally thin for 17 years. If the culture wasn't in this state, he wouldn't be digging back 45, 50 years.

"Because when I was 16, 19, 20, I wasn't digging back 40 or 50 years. I wasn't interested. Maybe 10 years before; but I was so captivated, inspired and informed by what was around me I had no time to go back 40, 50 years – and I didn't want to.

"I think it was Karl Marx in *Capital* who wrote about putting the means of production in the hands of the people. Translate that to where we are now in the 21st century, with all of the cheap technology. Just because you can buy it doesn't mean you can do it. You need a good idea. I think the downside to all this affordable technology is mediocrity, which is celebrated in the 21st century.

"I'd argue that art was better when shit cost more. Because it weeded out the people that were just fucking about. I know that's a horrible thing to say. I grew up making Super 8 film. Every three minutes of film cost me, with processing, about 15 or 16 pounds. Best training I had. It made me think about what I did.

"When Joe Strummer wanted to get a guitar, he had to beg, steal, cheat and borrow to get a guitar. Then he had to do all that again to get an amp. The ease of things now has removed the pain and the passion. The problem isn't with the technology, it's how it's used. All this stuff is great; it's how we apply it.

"When you're young, life is very black and white: it's this and that. But as you get older, you appreciate the shades of grey. It's a drag – you can talk yourself out of doing anything. I kind of like that blind rage of youth, but I don't wish to be young again. I don't miss that blind rage, because I'm an angry old man [laughs]." ●

Don's collection looks pretty healthy to us, considering he lost most of his previous haul to a fire

"MUSIC CAN BE A TOOL FOR SOCIAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH"

DON LETTS

THE FACTORY
THE FIREPLACE SWELL MAPS
PLAYERS ASSOCIATION
TEARDROP EXPLODES

Getty

FAC 40

Peter Saville, Tony Wilson and Alan Erasmus outside the Russell Club in 1979

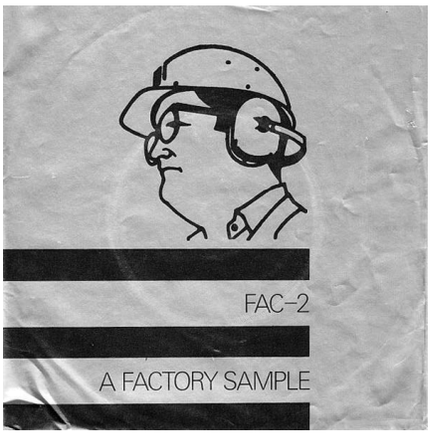
25 years after it closed, it's still Manchester's favourite factory. **Gareth Murphy** speaks to the key figures behind one of the world's most iconic labels and reveals how Factory Records and its Haçienda nightclub pumped out the sounds, sleeves and spirit that defined an entire epoch of British pop culture...

A Salford headmaster looked down at a teenage dosser named Bernard Sumner. "You'll end up working in a factory!" was his famous prediction. The joke being that by the time Sumner and his mates found their Factory, its owner, Tony Wilson, described the daily work as "the art of the playground". Or so the mythology goes. For the story of Factory Records, Joy Division, The Haçienda and everything around it has been told and retold from so many embellished perspectives, at one point it was even a comedy film – *24 Hour Party People*, starring Steve Coogan as an Alan Partridge caricature of Tony Wilson.

With most of its protagonists now dead, the true story is only starting to settle. It all began in the spring of 1978, when the original Factory began puffing its new-wavy steam over Manchester's bleak skyline. Not yet a record label, for one year 'Factory' was a theme night at the Russell Club, a West Indian venue in one of Manchester's roughest and ugliest neighbourhoods.

"The Warholian name of this enterprise," wrote an early reviewer in *Sounds*, "must seem like something of an enormous joke to the local residents of Hulme, Manchester's disastrous answer to Stalinist architecture." For the door price of 79p, punters got to see three new bands, including the likes of Joy Division, Cabaret Voltaire, The Fall, Magazine, Throbbing Gristle, Wire, Human League, Gang Of Four, Mekons, OMD, Echo & The Bunnymen, Ultravox, The Teardrop Explodes, Simple Minds, The Cramps, The B-52's, Suicide and a host of Northern bands with improbable names – such as FC Domestos.

Meeting and greeting in the crowd, the party host was Tony Wilson, the face of Greater Manchester prime-time politics show, *Granada Reports*. The organising, however, was mostly left to Alan Erasmus, Factory's nuts-and-bolts man, whose flat on 86 Palatine Road became the production office. The third partner was student graphic designer Peter Saville, whose iconic Factory logo, thus catalogued as FAC 1, was actually



The *A Factory Sample* 7", released in 1978, compiled New Order, John Dowie, The Durutti Column and Cabaret Voltaire

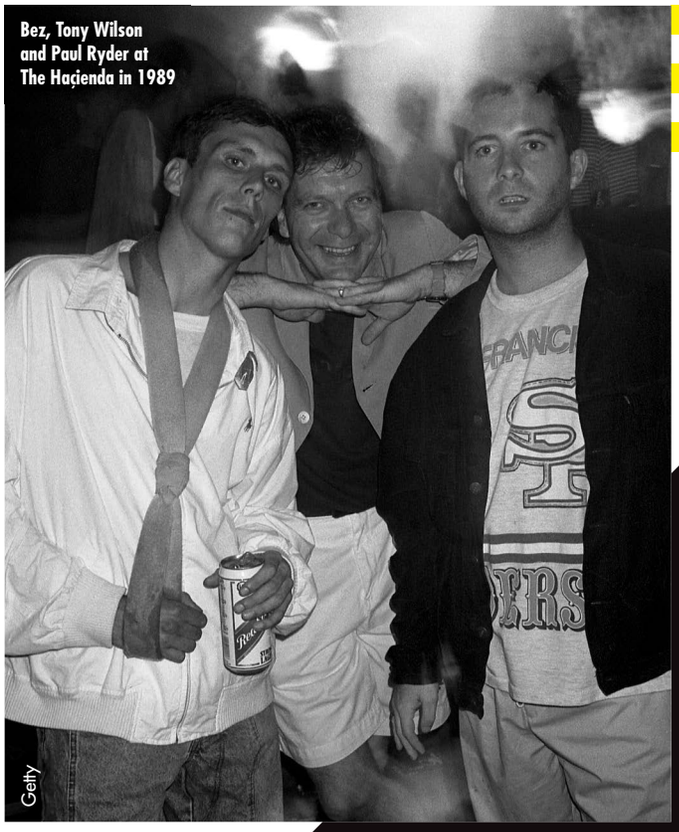
a gig poster. Although earning a good salary from his day job at Granada Television – which included a music show, *So It Goes* – Wilson soon learned running small gigs was a thankless hobby, even with Erasmus and Saville doing the hard work. "There is no more a painful experience," Wilson later described, "than when you've got a club and you've got a band on, you're paying 40 quid for the club and £110 for the band, and there's two people who bought tickets."

By late 1978, he was enviously watching a local player named Tosh Ryan, boss of Rabid Records, the home of both John Cooper Clarke and Jilted John of "Gordon is a moron" infamy. Rabid, like 2 Tone, Mute and many other homespun indies, were simply feeding their records into Rough Trade's network of likeminded stores, or the cartel, as this growing distribution system was being affectionately termed. Rabid's talented producer was Martin Hannett, who also hung out at Factory gigs and began socialising with Wilson. Another bystander and future partner was a former club DJ, Rob Gretton, the manager of Joy Division, who themselves were fast becoming Manchester's new hopefuls.

CITY FUN

Tony Wilson put up £5,000 of his mother's inheritance to record and press a Factory double-EP sampler. It was partly an attempt to launch the band he'd been unsuccessfully managing, The Durutti Column. Fortunately, Martin Hannett scored an unexpected winner by completely revamping two Joy Division tracks, *Digital* and *Glass*, which were proudly showcased on Side A. The other three sides were filled by The Durutti Column, John Dowie and Cabaret Voltaire, who closed the record with two intriguing tracks, *Baader Meinhof* and *Sex In Secret*. In true DIY spirit, all 4,700 plastic sleeves were handmade by Wilson and his entourage.

As Joy Division started to make a name for themselves outside Manchester, Hannett and Gretton grew more involved in helping Wilson, Erasmus and Saville build a proper label – albeit still just a telephone number in Erasmus's flat. Two successful singles quickly followed: *All Night Party* by A Certain Ratio and *Electricity* by OMD. Beyond releasing records, the original policy was also to document visual art. FAC 7 was Peter


Bez, Tony Wilson and Paul Ryder at The Haçienda in 1989

Getty

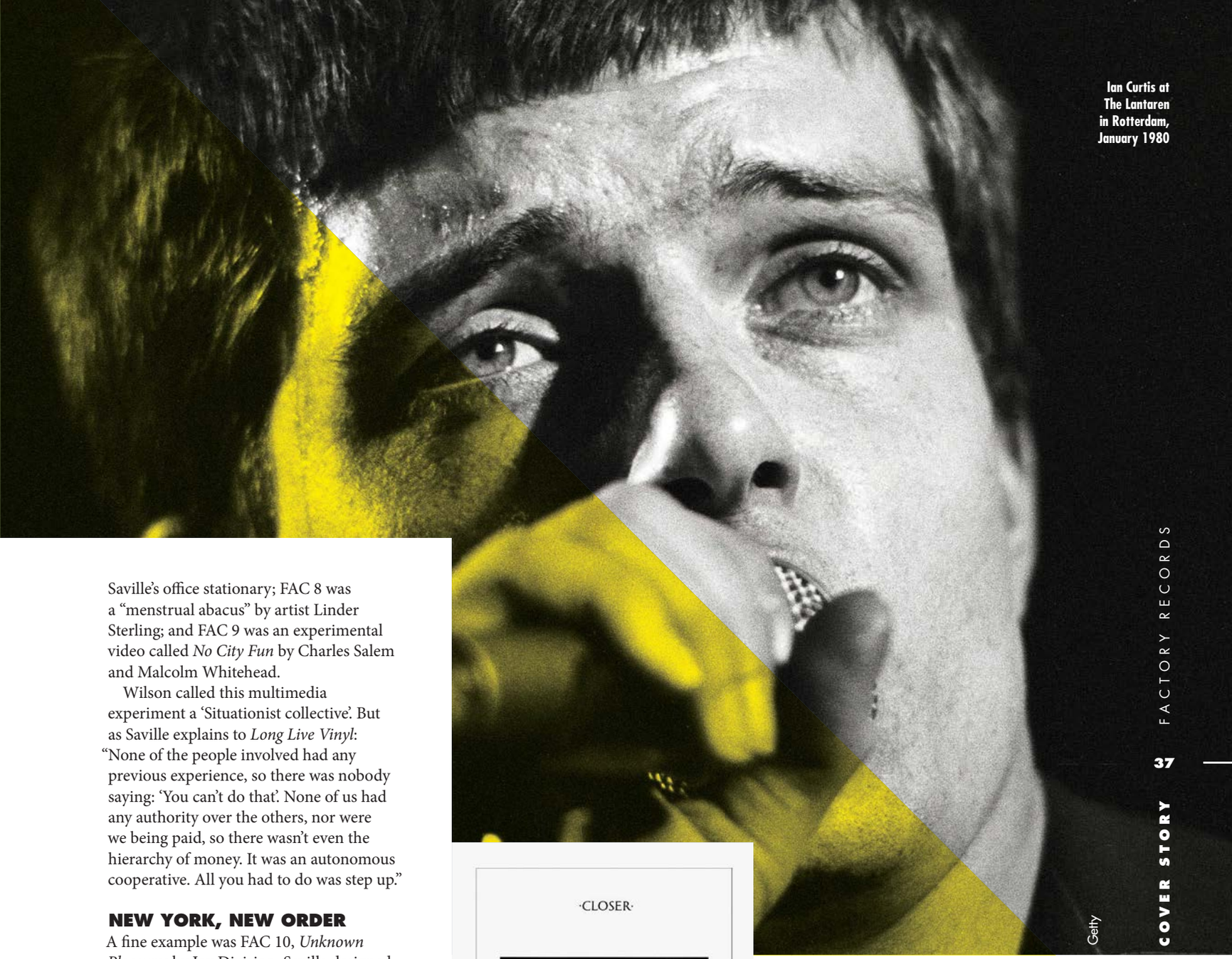
SUNKEN TREASURE

A decade of classics from Joy Division and New Order may have kept Factory's production lines rolling, but plenty of other valuable releases have slipped through the cracks of time. Gareth Murphy digs up five lesser-known gems that deserve greater attention.

1 A CERTAIN RATIO
FLIGHT
(FAC 22, 1980, 12")

Recorded in Strawberry Studios straight after their New York reconnaissance mission of August 1980, this 12" illustrates both ACR's musicianship and Martin Hannett's producing genius. Marvel at the stereo drum effects on the hauntingly beautiful title track which, as its name suggests, gradually takes to the air. This is a post-punk masterpiece that immerses you in the lost atmosphere of 1980, and yet, is strangely prescient of 90s electronic music of the Kruder & Dorfmeister kind. At six minutes, Side A is worth the ticket price alone, but on the B-side is *Blown Away* – a percussive experiment showing ACR were the first Factory group to embrace dance. *And Then Again* closes this Holy Grail 12" with three minutes of bendy drum 'n' bass.

"NONE OF US HAD ANY AUTHORITY OVER THE OTHERS, NOR WERE WE BEING PAID"



Ian Curtis at The Lantaren in Rotterdam, January 1980

Getty

Saville's office stationary; FAC 8 was a "menstrual abacus" by artist Linder Sterling; and FAC 9 was an experimental video called *No City Fun* by Charles Salem and Malcolm Whitehead.

Wilson called this multimedia experiment a 'Situationist collective'. But as Saville explains to *Long Live Vinyl*: "None of the people involved had any previous experience, so there was nobody saying: 'You can't do that'. None of us had any authority over the others, nor were we being paid, so there wasn't even the hierarchy of money. It was an autonomous cooperative. All you had to do was step up."

NEW YORK, NEW ORDER

A fine example was FAC 10, *Unknown Pleasures* by Joy Division. Saville designed the sleeve as a striking piece of wall art – in the routine manner, on his own, without hearing the master. It was the same for the album's innovative sound. Martin Hannett got Stephen Morris to deconstruct the drums into separate recordings, so that he could pan the parts dynamically. He even kicked the band out of his studio to mix the album alone – as if Joy Division was his own sonic statement.

A steady stream of singles and albums followed from Joy Division, A Certain Ratio, The Distractions, The Durutti Column and other one-offs. Needless to say, the suicide of Ian Curtis in May 1980 – before the second album *Closer* was even released, changed Factory forever. In the summer of 1980, as *Love Will Tear Us Apart* hung on the airwaves, the renamed New Order followed A Certain Ratio to New York, accompanied by Wilson, Gretton and Hannett. Although the trip was a logistical nightmare of stolen gear and lost luggage,

"the three weeks saw the team spending a lot of time either playing or hanging out at Hurrah's and Danceteria," remembered Wilson. "Cool design. Clubs as venues and disco and style lounge, all in one. The kind of clubs that David Byrne could go to the toilet in."

It was while plugged into the downtown dance scene that a lightbulb flicked on in Gretton's head: "If New York has them, then why the fuck doesn't Manchester?". From that point onwards, New Order and A Certain Ratio began mixing Northern post-punk with the rhythmic, melting-pot madness of downtown New York.

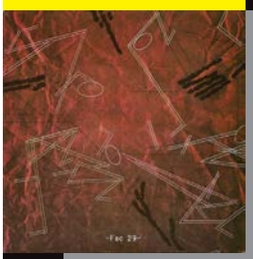
"It wasn't a blinding flash of light on the road to Damascus," says Stephen Morris to *Long Live Vinyl*. "I think we were already heading that way, anyway. But it's true that we picked up a lot of the ideas that later came out. New York was Talking Heads, it was punk and dance completely mixed up. I remember watching ESG thinking they were the best band I'd ever heard. Tony and Rob were looking at the way warehouses and industrial spaces were being used. And Martin was way ahead of his time. The Fairlight sampler had just been invented and he knew it was the future."

Collectively, they were seeing all the way into the 90s. The problem was that none of Factory's five partners understood the rules of business. Hannett's pleas to spend Joy Division profits on state-of-the-art digital machinery were overruled. Instead, Wilson

and Gretton spent tens of thousands building The Haçienda inside a rented building. By the time it opened in 1982 to bemused reactions, they sold drinks at cost price. It was the same for everything else. Artists' contracts weren't signed, books weren't kept, tax returns were botched, there was no clear chain of responsibility. The members of New Order, who were taking only a small salary themselves, unwittingly became The Haçienda's caretakers. "It's alright for you, Tony," was a common outburst. "You've got a proper job!"

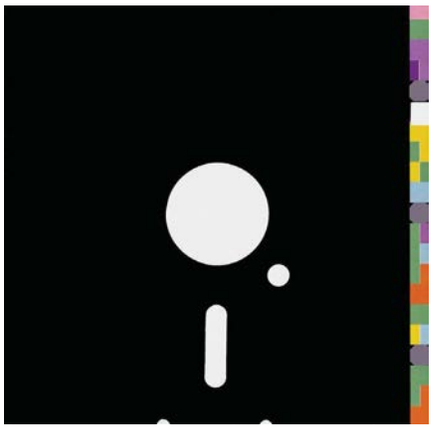
To everyone's growing frustration, Wilson was only a part-timer, playing the part of impresario. In reality, the club was a royalty-guzzling flop and the record label's phone often rang unanswered. So when, in early 1983, New Order recorded *Blue Monday*, Saville simply sent its elaborate sleeve design to the printers without consulting band or label. It proved so costly, Factory lost money on the first run.

But even that was considered a slightly hilarious artistic sacrifice. "Gloriously doomed," is how Stephen Morris describes Factory's romantic curse. But if Factory, The Haçienda and even New Order, survived all these spectacular own goals, it always came back to the underlying Northern spirit that enabled everyone to have honest fights – usually about money – but stick together and muddle onwards anyway. "We didn't even try to operate like a proper label," says Morris. "Martin Hannett had wanted to model Factory on Stiff, but it ended up being this closely knit thing." The way in which the drummer's wife, Gillian Gilbert, had been brought into New Order was how everything operated. "The reason Factory never signed The Smiths was only because we didn't know each other," continues Morris. "We never listened to demos or went looking for stuff. We'd hear someone's brother had a band, so we'd help them. That's how we signed the Happy Mondays. They supported us. They were our mates."



2 THE NAMES
NIGHT SHIFT
(FAC 29, 1981, 7")

Here, Martin Hannett places a young Belgian group into his opiated soundscape. A night sky, lashings of echo and glassy percussive effects are stitched subtly into the mix – as if you're walking down a dead-end street in 1981 with broken glass sparkling in the street lights. The Names were never big, but this hypnotic tune, which seems to hang in the air without any resolution, has attained classic status among clued-in collectors. Its B-side, *I Wish I Could Speak Your Language*, makes this a perfectly atmospheric bubble of post-punk spirit.



Peter Saville sent his iconic *Blue Monday* sleeve to the printers without consulting the band

THE SUN KING

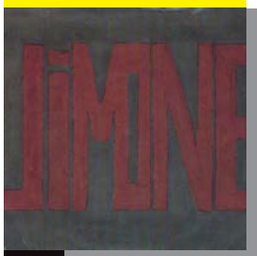
There were, however, two sides to the growing family. To the working-class majority, Wilson was the very definition of what Hannett always described as the "Didsbury Mafia" – bourgeois bohemians who lived in the leafy suburb of Didsbury. Wilson's clan also included The Durutti Column – regulars on the label, despite never scoring any hits, nor even sounding as if they belonged on Factory. In fact, Wilson was responsible for many of Factory's dud records – of which there were plenty. But even his fiercest critics happily acknowledge that he did possess a confidence and magnetism without which Factory may not have broken out of Manchester.

Wilson was a brilliant networker who opened doors, threw parties, organised overseas trips, and kept bringing new faces into the fold, such as Michael Shamberg, the award-winning video producer for New Order's *True Faith*. As Saville puts it: "Factory

New Order's success consistently bankrolled Factory Records' exploits

Photoshot

Getty



3 JAMES
JIMONE
(FAC 78, 1983, 7")

It's a three-track 7" called *Jimone,* but its claim to (cult) fame is *What's The World* on Side B. It's a truly rousing little indie song just shy of two minutes, but bursting with Northern spirit. At a glance, James could be mistaken for The Associates or The Fall, but this pint-splashing street anthem shows these local heroes deserve their own place in indie folklore. It's been covered by many, especially The Smiths on their *The Sound Of The Smiths* LP. In fact, you'd be forgiven for wondering if Morrissey learned some of his lyrical and vocal licks from this song.

was like a solar system and its sun was definitely Tony. Without him, everyone wouldn't have been locked in orbit. We would have all hurtled off in different directions."

But because New Order was the cash cow, few underestimate the subtle influence of the band's manager, Rob Gretton. A sharp-tongued but fiercely loyal character, who scribbled his mile-a-minute ideas into elaborate notebooks, he believed in the principle that New Order should "never peak". He preferred to pack out small venues than struggle to fill bigger halls. He developed anti-publicity tricks, such as only telling one journalist in a city to report an upcoming gig inside an article – thus provoking "is it true, is it not?" word-of-mouth. Despite excellent ears and touches of creative genius, Gretton also had a dark and addictive streak. When taking ferries, he'd pour all his money into fruit machines, then ask all of the band to lend him whatever they had in their pockets.

It was the same with drugs. Throughout the mid 80s, Gretton smoked and snorted himself into a full-blown clinical depression and had to be hospitalised – a breakdown from which he never fully recovered.

POWER...

Meanwhile, Tony Wilson was sniffing around Hollywood in big suits alongside the wheeler-dealers who orbited Qwest, a Warner-affiliated label that licensed New Order's American rights. This was Factory's corporate period – a time of rapid growth, *MTV* videos and property acquisitions, complete with a monster Quincy Jones remix of *Blue Monday* which topped the *Billboard* dance charts in 1988. The increasingly coked-up Wilson had to admit to an interviewer at the time that: "I'm out of touch with the street. Between '76 and '81, I knew everything that was being released and I saw a different band every night. But that part of your life passes, and now I rely on other people to tell me what's happening."

One such example was Mike Pickering, a Haçienda DJ and Quando Quango member. He remembers how "Rob Gretton and I wanted a dance label; Factory Dance… you could feel it happening… God bless Tony, but I don't think he had the vision Rob had. Tony said dance would never happen."

By late 1987, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at The Haçienda were packed with 1,200 ravers. "The music was coming from all angles," explained Jon Dasilva, who DJ'd Ibiza-themed parties on Wednesdays. "From the deepest Detroit techno, into hip-hop and into garage, back to house and into acid house. It wasn't just the chemicals, it was the music… the whole thing hit The Haçienda like a thundering train."

With the club finally making a profit and Manchester visibly waking up from its post-war slump, New Order gave their blessing for a second bar – Dry. Unfortunately, the sunny economic outlook didn't last long. Britain's first ecstasy death was on the dance floor of The Haçienda in the summer of 1989. Gangland thugs, undercover cops and heavy bouncers were rapidly souring the party atmosphere. If all that wasn't damaging enough, the landlord threatened to sell the freehold out from under their feet. So they bought it for £1 million, just before the police threatened to revoke the club's alcohol licence.

At this point, things weren't well at the record label, either. Following *Technique*, recorded throughout 1988 at huge expense, New Order embarked on solo follies, in particular Peter Hook's side project, Revenge, which alone cost £250,000. With the demise of Rough Trade, Factory wound

BY LATE 1987, NIGHTS AT THE HAÇIENDA WERE PACKED WITH 1,200 RAVERS

Peter Hook and Shaun Ryder at The Haçienda in 1989

Getty

up on a costly new distribution deal with Pinnacle, as overspending on Wilson's various vanity projects built up debts. There was Factory Classical – a hare-brained sub-label which ate up £100,000 on intellectual flops. "I didn't want to stay and watch the company destroy itself," said the label's general manager Tina Simmons, who resigned on April Fool's Day, 1990. "From that point on, Tony had too much control." Wilson's problem was not only weak ears and a cocaine habit, as the sharp-eyed QC who defended The Haçienda's alcohol licence (for legal fees of £250,000) told Wilson in private; the endangered club needed him to behave like a responsible owner, not a "loudmouth" journalist.

CORRUPTION...

In the bitter end, Morris recalls how: "Rob would call on a Friday and say 'The Haçienda needs another £40,000 or else it's gonna close next week'. I reached a point when it was like: 'Good! Let it all fucking collapse!'. It was just awful. But for Rob, it was like the fruit machine. You couldn't drag him away. He just kept pushing everything into it." The inevitable was staved off for a few months, thanks to the Happy Mondays' brilliant *Pills 'N' Thrills And Bellyaches*, recorded in LA with producers Paul Oakenfold and Steve Osborne. Released just before Christmas 1990, it brought in urgently needed cash throughout 1991. Unfortunately, with New Order out of order, the Happy Mondays weren't going to save Factory from its own indebted, dysfunctional self. Although the Mondays had got it surprisingly together for their breakthrough album, fame and fortune didn't suit Shaun Ryder.

As he slid into heroin addiction, the nail in the coffin was the next album, *Yes Please!* – Factory's last gamble, and by all accounts a Caribbean disaster of crashed cars and crack

4 SECTION 25 LOOKING FROM A HILLTOP (FAC 108, 1984, 12")

If you're looking for purist electro, this is as deep as it gets. Co-produced by Bernard Sumner and A Certain Ratio drummer Donald Johnson, *Looking From A Hilltop* is an electro gem that still sounds fresh and subversive. Section 25 were Blackpool brothers Larry and Vincent Cassidy, who had supported Joy Division in the old days and gradually evolved with Factory into a more synth-based outfit.

Joined on this track by vocalist Jenny Ross, *Looking From A Hilltop* is edgy, dreamy and oozing full-flavoured Northernness. Bleak yet homely, it's got a sweet-and-sour effect that straddles the frontier between post-punk and dance. Side B is an eight-minute Megamix of the same tune that today's DJs still consider electro hard currency.

The New Order *Blue Monday* US promotional 7" featuring a remix by John Potoker, supervised by Quincy Jones

Getty

DJs Jon Dasilva, Mike Pickering and Laurent Garnier at HOT at The Haçienda in 1988

1990's *Pills 'N' Thrills And Bellyaches* was the Happy Mondays' crowning achievement

Getty

dens. On Wilson's insistence, the album's co-producers were Talking Heads' rhythm section Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz. "I've seen a lot of people who live life on the edge," mused Weymouth, "but I've never before seen a group of people who had no idea where the edge is." With *Yes Please!* failing to pull off the multi-million dollar miracle, Factory went bankrupt in 1992. The Haçienda somehow nearly saw out the millennium, thanks largely to the support of the city's Labour MPs, who agreed with Wilson it was a symbol of Manchester's renaissance. The jury, however, is still out on Wilson's own legacy. And on that question, New Order's members are still scratching their heads.

...AND TIES

For years, they regretted the catastrophic waste of money – Peter Hook makes no secret of the fact that he still does. But following the deaths of both Rob Gretton and Tony Wilson, Bernard Sumner has grown philosophical. "Whenever we were moaning about the money that we'd put into The Haçienda, or the money we lost on *Blue Monday*... Rob Gretton used to say to us: 'Fuckin' hell, what you've got, money can't buy'. And he was absolutely right. Whenever I bump into somebody like Bono, or him out of Coldplay, you name 'em, these multi-multi-millionaires, they don't have an iota of what we've got – which is respect. We kept our credentials and never sold out." Hearing this, Stephen Morris laughs. "Did Bernard really say something that profound? It's true, though. Except that we did sell out, a bit. Like doing a greatest hits – *Substance* – because we needed the money. But yeah, the most important thing in life is respect."

So folks, forget the comic-book scenes of Alan Partridge on ecstasy. The true story of Factory is about family spirit and Northern values. The photos on the mantelpiece, the records on the shelf, the respect of an entire community – all these things are worth so much more than money. And anyway, everyone involved would've wound up far poorer had they not done it. Had it been run as a proper business, the product wouldn't have been half as good, the profits would've long since been spent by now, and we definitely wouldn't be talking about it in 2018. Joy Division, New Order, Peter Saville's artwork, the videos, the 12"s, The Haçienda, Madchester… because everything was so radical, Factory's creations have grown into museum-standard pop art.

On the genealogical tree of genres, it's even the missing link between UK music's last true happenings: punk and rave. Manchester has every reason to be proud. You shall know a tree by its fruit. ●

5 HAPPY MONDAYS
W.F.L. (THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE)
(FAC 232, 1989, 12')

It's hard to pick a Happy Mondays 12", but the various remixes of *Wrote For Luck* marked the first clear milestone into full-flavoured Madchester. The original version was produced by Martin Hannett – brought back in from the cold by the Mondays, despite his lawsuit against Factory five years previously. Admittedly, by 1988, the drug-addled producer was out of touch with the emerging club scene, but he recognised that unlike the other Madchester contenders, the Mondays possessed a peculiar harmonic magic. *Wrote For Luck* emerged from the gruelling jam sessions Hannett put them through, and became their first underground hit. But it was the clubby remixes by other DJs that upped the ante, especially Paul Oakenfold's *W.F.L. (Think About The Future)*, released in 1989. Although the A-side of this 12" contains a Vince Clarke remix, the future belonged to its funkier B-side. Oakenfold went on to remix *Hallelujah*, then produce *Pills 'N' Thrills And Bellyaches*.

FORGET ALAN PARTRIDGE ON ECSTASY. THE TRUE FACTORY STORY IS ABOUT FAMILY SPIRIT

WHY VINYL MATTERS PETER SAVILLE

In this exclusive extract from the new book *Why Vinyl Matters* by Jennifer Otter Bickerdike, Factory Records' designer **Peter Saville** explains how art, culture, theory and music intersect in his work…

The art director of the legendary inedependent UK label Factory Records, Peter Saville rose to fame through the record sleeves he designed for Joy Division (and later New Order) at the beginning of their career. He is associated with radical designs that omit 'necessary' information, such as names or titles, while embracing open space.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FIRST VINYL EXPERIENCE AND HOW THAT AFFECTED YOUR PERSONAL DESIGN AESTHETIC...

"At the very beginning, with Factory Records, my thoughts were about what I would like pop culture to be. As a 20-year-old in the UK in 1975, I thought: 'What is lacking in *my* world? In *my* culture?'. In a very unprecedented and unique way, within the possibilities of post-punk, I had the opportunity to make some suggestions about pop culture. Factory could be understood as an autonomous collective, which is sort of an oxymoron – but that is very much what it was, by virtue of not being founded on the principles of profit. It was a stage for facilitating, brought wonderfully into existence by Tony Wilson. A stage upon which any of the players could express themselves. Growing up, the music collection came into the home via my two older brothers. In 1974, there was something that was not on their radar, so I had to buy it myself. It was Kraftwerk's single *Autobahn*. It was a hit in the UK; I think it got playlisted as a novelty! I did not hear it as a novelty. *Autobahn* tapped into my studies about modernism, as well as being about music and just *coolness*. I bought the single, then learnt about the 22-minute version on the album; I had to have it. The cover of *Autobahn* in the UK was the blue-and-white monochrome image of the autobahn sign. This cover was my introduction to semiotics, though I did not know the word at the time. What I absorbed from that cover would shape my sensibility. It was not an epiphany when I bought the record. It was just one of those things that on reflection, was fundamental. Sometimes it's family, sometimes it's a moment at school; you never know when it's happening, but there are moments in life where your future takes shape…

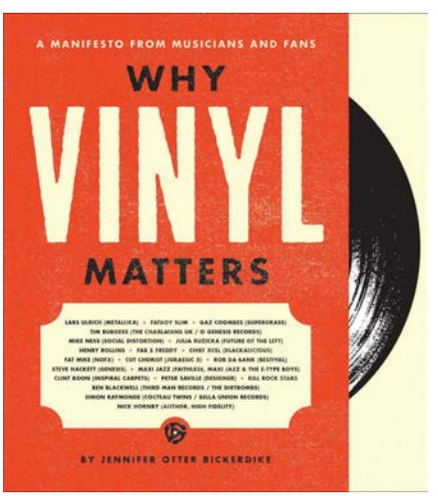
"What I felt from the 22 minutes of *Autobahn* was a European experience. We did not travel abroad in my family. I may have been on a school holiday once to Switzerland, but I didn't know much about continental Europe. I was fascinated and intrigued by it, though; even as a teenager, Europe was sexy. Places like Saint-Tropez – that sounded sexy! And Berlin – ominous. So I had a fantasy of Europe. What I heard when listening to *Autobahn* could be encapsulated as a journey across Europe. Then I looked at the cover; there was this simple, monochrome symbol. That sign was able to represent 500 years of European cultural history to me. The potency, the language within imagery – it still astounds me to this day. I see that symbol, and I see the history of Europe, from the Dark Ages to the Cold War. Because time is a road, a pathway, a super highway – an autobahn. And that journey, because of the conflation of classical chords and contemporary synthesisers, was a conflation of time. It was the 12th century to the 20th century.

"I'd listen to *Autobahn* and contemplate the European canon, from cathedrals to power stations. That's what I got from my first vinyl purchase. Five years later, I was looking at a sign on a workshop door at art college that said 'Use Hearing Protection'. In that sign, the entire genre of what we call 'industrial music' was epitomised. That sign was coming off that door and home with me! It defined the beginning of Factory. It is my version of *Autobahn*. 'Use Hearing Protection' in the context of a musical situation refers directly to the industry of sound; the industry of music, the music industry, the 'industrial' factor inherent to 'making music'. Machine music. So A*utobahn* is really important to me, as my first lesson in semiotics."

HOW MUCH INPUT DO YOU HAVE WHEN YOU'RE PUTTING TOGETHER A COVER?

"This varies enormously. From complete control to consultant advice. The situation at

Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* 7", with its blue and white monochrome image, was one of the most influential sleeves for a young Peter Saville



***Why Vinyl Matters* by Jennifer Otter Bickerdike is a 224-page manifesto on the vinyl format's importance and the art of sound. All manner of music-industry voices are represented, ranging from artists to producers and DJs to label owners. Find out more at www.accartbooks.com**

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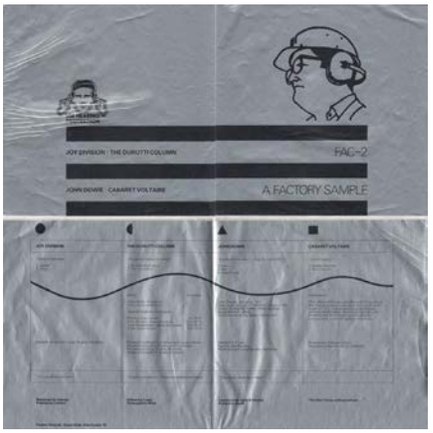


Factory was unprecedented. That was really my first experience. I did the first Factory poster while in my final term at college in 1978 – the black and yellow FAC 1. Modest affluence and the tolerance of my parents afforded me a very comfortable existence when I was at art school. I dragged that out for nine further months, until my father lost his temper with me. But in those months, between doing the first Factory poster and finally getting a job, Factory was founded.

"We formed the label mostly through a sort of serendipitous opportunity. One day, Tony, Alan Erasmus and I were sitting in Alan's flat – 86 Palatine Road in Manchester. Completely out of the blue, Tony suggested that we release a record. He said: 'Look, some of the bands that have played Factory nights [the name 'Factory' was originally used for a club, run by the label], don't have a record deal yet. Why don't we make a record from the club? And that will help some of these bands to get a deal'. So it was a strategy from Tony, in a post-punk independent way. From my point of view, it was entirely self-interest to do a record cover… And then Alan said: 'How are you going to pay for it?'. Tony said: 'I have £5,000 that my mother left me; we've got to do it for that'. I just thought, can you release a record for £5,000? But it was the spirit of the time. In 1978, the phenomenon of independence was being realised. People around the country found out that you could actually release a record yourself – you didn't need to sign your life away to EMI or CBS. Tony knew that.

"For £5,000, we made *A Factory Sample*. This was where the autonomous collective began. The £5,000 went to realising the product. No one was paid. Everyone was there because they wanted to do something, and nobody had any formal experience. No one knew what they were doing, so therefore no one presumed to tell anyone else how to do their job. It was a bit like friends having a party; you don't criticise the shortcomings!

"When it comes to *Unknown Pleasures* [Joy Division's debut album], the group gave me the pulsar diagram from the *Cambridge Encyclopedia Of Astronomy*. They had found this image and thought it was interesting – and they were right. It's fabulously enigmatic. It's brilliant. They gave me that, they gave me some credits; they said they wanted it white on the outside and black on the inside. Stephen Morris said: 'Textured paper is quite nice'. After that, I just got on and did it! I did what I could do. It was the first 'real' work of graphic design I had ever done, so I didn't really know what I was doing. It was great they wanted it black and white, as I couldn't do colour – I had no idea how to do anything in colour. It was the days of paste-up and mechanical artwork; everything was a learning curve. And I was at the very bottom of it. I couldn't figure out the sizing of things. I decided that I wanted to have the wave diagram; I wanted that on the label. But then I thought: 'If it's bigger on the outside and smaller on the inside, would that look weird? Maybe it should be the same size all the way through'. So the size it had to be to fit on the label ended up being the size on the outside."

IT ENDED UP BEING QUITE SMALL ON THE ACTUAL COVER, THEN?

"Yes. It sits in a sea of black – space."

BUT WHEN IT TRANSLATES TO THE CD, IT'S A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PROPORTION…

"Yes. That's one of the problems with scale. I also wasn't sure where to put the words. When taking the brief at the beginning, I said to the band: 'Does anyone want it to say Joy Division on the front?' 'Mmm, no, we don't mind; not really. No, no, it's not cool'. Okay, we all agree – *not cool*. 'Does anyone want to have the title on the front?' 'Well, you know, that's probably not cool, either'. So I was at liberty to use the given elements as I felt appropriate. Had the cover been for a major record company, they would not have accepted the artwork. At that time, and right through to the end of the 80s and particularly in the US, unless the name of the artist and the name of the album were on the top third of the front cover, record stores wouldn't take it. So we were out on the fringe. Everybody involved had total autonomy. No one actually approved the cover. I just took it to show it to Rob Gretton, the manager of Joy Division, then New Order, and he said, 'Oh, that looks alright'. That was it. Beginning to end."

HOW DIFFERENT WAS CREATING THE COVER FOR JOY DIVISION FROM WORKING WITH WHAM! OR ROXY MUSIC?

"It's totally different. When I did *Unknown Pleasures*, the band knew what imagery they wanted to use because they had been thinking about it for months – but when we got to *Closer*, Joy Division's second record, it was a different story. They were recording at Britannia Row in London. I lived nearby, so we met up. The band had nothing, so they defaulted to me for the *Closer* image. I didn't know. I hadn't even heard the recording; I didn't know what it was called. But I was

"IT'S A HEARTRENDING AND BREATHTAKING STORY ABOUT THIS YOUNG RESEARCHER, THE PHYSICIST WHO DISCOVERED THE FIRST PULSAR"

pressured to put something in front of them.

"I showed them these Bernard Pierre Wolff photographs, not expecting them to like them – 12 months earlier, they had given me a scientific diagram! Rob put me on the spot. He asked: 'What are you into?' As Joy Division became New Order, my situation at Factory evolved into creative autonomy.

"Take something like *Blue Monday*. The group and the company didn't even see it; it went straight from me to the printer. The group didn't see it until it was in the shop! That summarises the nature of my relationship with New Order through to the end of Factory in 1993. I did the covers; they made the records. They didn't like the covers? We didn't talk about it. I tried to get their consensus – but nothing ever came of it, and at the end of the day, I just had to get on and do it. I tried, out of respect, to get their guidance, to get their take on what I was developing. I'd say to them: 'I like this and this and this, what do you like?'. But it became evident really quickly that they all disagreed in principle. Post-Ian Curtis, there was no hierarchical structure within New Order until the mid 90s, when they reformed. They were previously a democracy. But after Curtis' death, they quickly became a democracy of disagreement. They never agreed. What's left when you don't make a decision? No decision. And that's what happened with the album covers. No one's say was greater than anyone else's, so once they disagreed, it was an impasse. I would turn to Rob; he would say: 'Just fucking do it'. In all other groups, there's a hierarchical structure. Even though there might not have been in the beginning, give a band a choice that needs to be made and a hierarchy of authority will very quickly crystallise. You soon know who it is: for a Roxy Music cover, it's Bryan Ferry. Suede has Brett Anderson. Pulp cover? Talk to Jarvis Cocker. And so on and so forth.

"There's no problem associated with a record cover other than the principal artist liking it. What's on the cover doesn't matter. Unlike any other form of packaging or

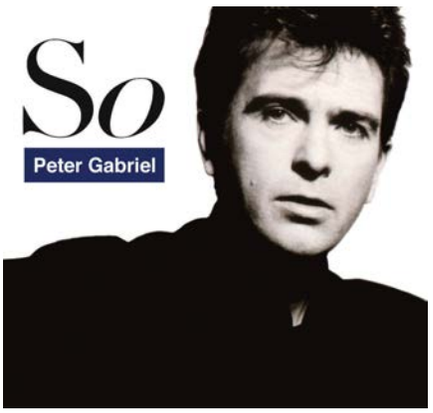
"Ian Curtis' death made it immortal" – Peter Saville on the *Unknown Pleasures* album-cover image

communication, nobody has *not* bought a record they wanted because they didn't like the cover! They may sometimes be influenced to buy a record that they are indecisive about because of the artwork, but if there is a song, a track – something that speaks to them – the cover art won't put them off. So, therefore, it doesn't really matter. But one thing does matter: the principal artist. Because if Bryan, Brett, or Madonna aren't happy, the release is delayed. Things like that are always left to the last minute, and ultimately, the record companies give in and say: 'You know, we don't fucking care. Just get it approved'. And the person it has to be approved by is the principal ego.

"That's how it works. Sometimes, the principal ego will leave it too late. I discussed a cover with Kanye West over the phone one day. I was actually standing outside a supermarket as I suggested what he could do. He had passed the deadline – and potentially burnt the release. I knew that Kim, his partner, was having a baby, and that they were getting married. He'd phoned me to ask: 'Have you seen the latest visuals?'. And I said: 'Kanye – isn't this coming out soon?'. He said, 'Yeah, next month'. And I said: 'Kanye, you won't have a cover'. And he said: 'How do you mean?'. I said: 'If this record is coming out in four weeks' time, you do not have a cover'. I asked: 'Is the release date important? Can it be delayed?'. 'No, no way'. I said: 'Then you don't have a cover'. He said: 'How do you mean?'. I said, 'You don't have time to finish one of these images, print it and proof it. You don't have a cover. You are not going to have a cover'. He said: 'What can I do?' and I said, 'Look in my book. You will see what looks like a cover, that wasn't a cover – it was a concept visualisation for New Order. It was for a version of *Crystal*, New Order's 2001 single, that never happened. It's a clear box with a stripe on it. And there's a clear CD in it. Just do that. Just put it in an empty box. I think something like that will be your only option at this time'. And sure enough, that's how the album came out. That is exactly what he did! That's the most 'arm's length' guidance I have ever given for a cover… from the car, outside a supermarket."

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO SEE THE *UNKNOWN PLEASURES* COVER EVERYWHERE?

"It's phenomenal. I have some unexpected friends and acquaintances because of it! One is Professor Brian Cox. He and I became friends because of a shared Manchester history. Brian, and his American wife Gia, who is quite obsessed with *Unknown Pleasures*, were able to enlighten me as to the true story of Jocelyn Bell Burnell. It's a heartrending and breathtaking story about this young researcher, the physicist who discovered the first pulsar



– the image used for the *Unknown Pleasures* cover. It begins with Jocelyn at Cambridge in the late 60s, a female postgraduate research assistant in a team of men. These men, her seniors, received a Nobel Prize based on her endeavours. At the time, they told Jocelyn she was seeing things. They even gave the prefix 'LGM' to her discovery – Little Green Men! But of course they were super happy to receive the Nobel Prize. She's the one who observed it first. Then two astrophysics professors from Cornell University plotted her data to create an enhanced version of the image as part of their PhD at Arecibo Observatory in Costa Rica. That's where the image comes from.

"From pasta plates to full-body tattoos, the distance that image has travelled is extraordinary. It's totally embedded in the universe of popular culture. For every slightly edgy kid, as they work back through the eras, there is Joy Division – along with The Velvet Underground and The Doors. It's so sci-fi, that image. And so ambiguous. You can project anything you want onto it. It's a heartbeat. It's a soundwave. It's a terrain. It's brilliant. Bernard Sumner saw it. Jocelyn Bell Burnell discovered it. The guys from Cornell shaped it. I framed it. And Ian Curtis' death made it immortal.

"With regards to *Unknown Pleasures*, I am just a contributor to a piece of late-20th century iconography. I just played a part. I placed it in space, in that sea of black. One of the things I can see in my early work, which I was not aware I was doing, was I created a lot of space around whatever it was I did. Most exciting, dynamic graphic design pushes the edges of things. It bounces *out* of the poster it is in. The record covers push away at the seams of their edges. They are exciting and dynamic. They create a cacophony of colour and form. If you stick a Peter Saville cover in amongst them, everything stops. The stillness of a gallery space is in that reductive, reticent style of mine. You see the *Unknown Pleasures* symbol *because* there is space around it to see it. When I see bootleg versions of it, where someone's made it as big as they can, it looks terrible. The endless T-shirts out there are awful. Nobody would have cared about it if it had not initially been shown to them beautifully. And, by chance, that's what I ended up doing. That was my contribution."

WHAT WAS YOUR MOST CHALLENGING RECORD COVER?

"One that instantly comes to mind is Peter Gabriel's *So*. I didn't really want to do it; I wasn't that interested in Peter Gabriel. Brett Wickens [Saville Associates Partner] liked Peter. Entirely independently, Brett got into working on a cover for him. He would ask, 'Do you want to talk about it?'. And I would say: 'No, not really. But you know, it's good, it's all good'. He went through trial and tribulation with it. I did not know then – but I subsequently found out – that Peter himself did not really want to be on the cover. When I looked eventually at his previous covers, he was hiding, behind a tree or similar. There was an initial almost completed cover, which Peter did not like. Brett told me we'd almost run out of time, and I said: 'I'm not surprised'. Brett said: 'We're not even sure about the title anymore. I think we should go see him'.

"When we did, this really nice man came out to greet us. He was lovely. Very affable. I liked him straight away. This is the stupid prejudice of life. We sat down and we had a chat. He said: 'Do you have any ideas?', and I said: 'Well, maybe'. Gail Colson was managing him. She had engaged us independently of the record label, so the budget was not restrictive. The problem with record covers is that they take about 10 times longer than you get paid for. So there is no long-term career path in doing record covers. They don't pay much, and year-on-year, they pay less. But Gail had made an exception for this record. I didn't know why. I was going to find out. Gail took me to one side and she said: 'He's made an important record. You have got to bring him out of himself'. I only vaguely sensed what she was getting at. I did not fully appreciate the situation. So we had this lovely hour with Peter. We just talked and then left. As we were leaving, he gave a cassette to Brett and he said: 'I think I've finished it'. Brett said: 'Thank you'.

"We got in the car, and we started driving away. We're heading for the motorway, and put the cassette on. First track: *Sledgehammer*. I stopped the car! I pulled over. I looked at Brett, and said: 'That is a hit. That is a *massive* hit'. And Brett was like: 'Yeah it is'. I mean it's impossible to not like *Sledgehammer*. But by the time it got to *Don't Give Up*, I was in tears. Within 45 minutes of having left Peter Gabriel's, I knew – just like with *Unknown Pleasures* – that I was listening to a great, seminal album. And that was when the cover started. I suddenly knew exactly what Gail Colson meant: I had to bring him out.

"A record like that needs a face. I am not a fan of faces on records. But for certain songs that reach hearts and minds around the world, an audience who doesn't know the artist needs someone to identify with. They need a face to go with the music. It has to attract, be relevant and be contemporary. For *So*, we went about it with photographer Trevor Key, in exactly the way we had gone about New Order's *Low-Life*, using a very special type of Polaroid roll film. The person being photographed is in control of the session; they're able to see the pictures as they happen – which was unusual then, as it was pre-digital. The same process had remarkable results with New Order, who also did not want to be photographed. The same thing happened with Peter. We got the shot in the third roll… He said: 'I don't want my name and title on the front'. I said, 'Fine'. That image of Peter Gabriel was the logo for *So*. It was the logo for Peter Gabriel for the next 20 years – the way the world still likes to think of him."

> "LIKE WITH UNKNOWN PLEASURES, I KNEW I WAS LISTENING TO A SEMINAL ALBUM"

FINAL THOUGHTS?

"The amount that is owed to Ian Curtis. The equity invested in Factory Records, the capital was Ian's life. Ian Curtis was going to change my life, although I didn't know it. I often argue that modern Manchester stands on his sacrifice. I have to acknowledge that the success of my career – not the work itself, but the success of the work – I owe that to Ian. There are many people who owe a lot to Ian. The passionate, tragic gesture he made, changed the lives of many. It's extraordinary. We cannot know when we first meet someone. Before I even got to know Ian, he was gone. If I describe to someone what a pulsar is, I tell them it's a dead star that continues to emit energy until the end of time; the analogy is profound." ●

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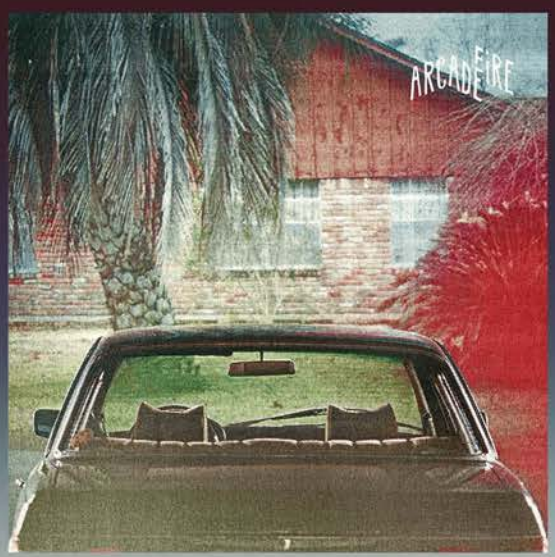

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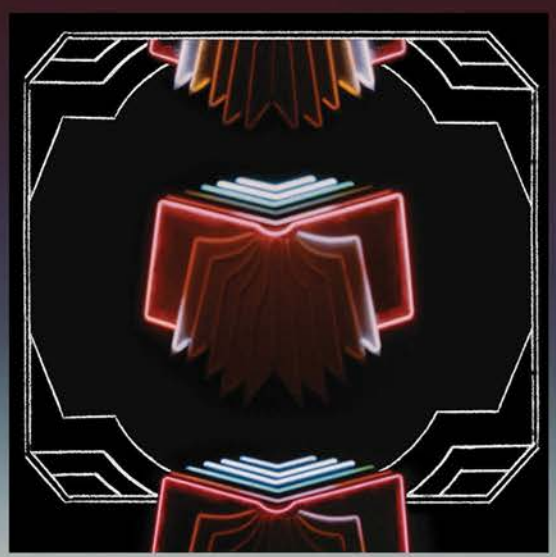

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METROPOLIS STUDIOS

MASTER CLASS

While few studios in the UK still cut live performances direct to disc, Metropolis in West London continues to offer the service. **Murray Stassen** met mastering engineer Peter Hewitt-Dutton at the world-famous recording complex to find out more about this extraordinary method of recording…

It seems appropriate that Metropolis Studios is housed in an actual powerhouse. The London-based music institution has been a sprawling hub of activity for almost 30 years, with the Grade II-listed Victorian building it calls home formerly powering the trams in the west of the city. The complex boasts a cavernous atrium that leads to its legendary recording facilities, which are occupied by some of the top resident mastering engineers in the business. Its list of famous clients reads like, well… a list of very famous clients.

Artists ranging from Queen to Michael Jackson, U2 and Amy Winehouse have had albums either recorded, mixed or mastered there and its industry-leading vinyl-related endeavours, including half-speed mastering and live, direct-to-disc cutting, have made it a key player in the ongoing growth of the format.

Long Live Vinyl made the pilgrimage to Chiswick for a tour of Metropolis' impressive interior, before speaking to resident mastering engineer Peter Hewitt-Dutton to find out more about cutting direct to disc.

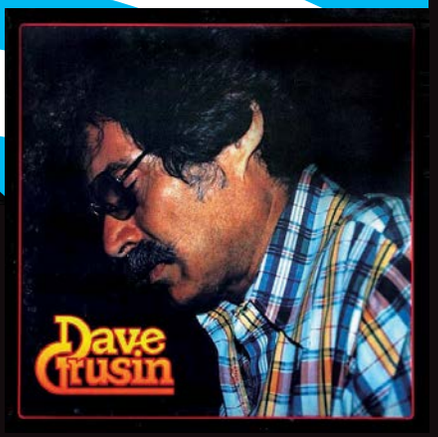
Hewitt-Dutton has been working as a mastering engineer at the facility for the last five years, getting his break in the

Recording direct to a vinyl lathe is an artform, and runs the risk of damaging the lathe itself

industry after "walking around with a big pile of CVs and a big smile, asking everyone for a job".

"This place finally had a night reception position, so I started doing that," he recalls. "I was doing that for about four years and doing bits of assisting here and there on the studio sessions downstairs. It got to a point where I realised I was quite interested in mastering.

"I started reading about [the discipline] and a few people had asked me to do a few things, because they thought I understood it. With the wealth of experience within the building, it seemed like the obvious



place to try and make the most of that. So I pestered them for any jobs that were in the mastering department as soon as they came up. I started working as an assistant, initially to John Davis (Lana Del Rey, The Prodigy, Royal Blood) and across the department."

Hewitt-Dutton explains that he spent a long time shadowing other engineers before being let anywhere near one of the vintage Neumann cutting lathes.

"The lathes are very fragile, very old and very hard to repair, so we're kind of reluctant to let anyone use them until they know what they're doing," he says.

"There's an awful lot of shadowing of other engineers cutting records to start off with, just watching what they're doing and what they're not doing, more importantly, before they say, 'Yeah, he's not going to break it, he knows what he's doing.'"

LIVE AND DIRECT

Using the lathe to record a live band performance direct to disc requires even more skill, says Hewitt-Dutton, with no room for error once the stylus on the lathe hits the lacquer. "You really need to know what you're looking for on it," he emphasises. "If you're cutting from a digital file or a tape or whatever, you can practise. You know which bits of the audio are going to be a problem for the cut, which bits are going to be easy for the cut, where you can use space and where you can't.

"When you're doing that live, you can't have that, you can't decide where you're going to put things. You can't decide how much space you're going to use, because you're relying on what's coming from downstairs [in the live room]. So, you've got to get the signal just right as it's going to the lathe."

Cutting direct to disc involves the recording of a live performance straight to a master lacquer. Overdubs aren't possible, so what you perform and record is exactly what you hear on vinyl. There is no 're-do' button if anyone makes a mistake.

One of the most famous practitioners of direct-to-disc recording is Sheffield Lab, an audiophile label set up by Doug Sax and Lincoln Mayorga. They've released records such as Dave Grusin's *Discovered Again!* and *The Sheffield Drum / Track Record*.

The latter features two wonderful, improvised drum solo tracks by Elvis Presley's drummer Ron Tutt and session musician Jim Keltner, who has worked with Bob Dylan, John Lennon, George Harrison and Ringo Starr.

Another key example of the audio quality that can be achieved by recording direct to disc can be heard in *I've Got The Music In Me* by Thelma Houston & Pressure Cooker. The album was produced by the legendary Bill Schnee and was recorded and released by Sheffield Lab in 1975.

"There are not many people who have done live-to-vinyl complete albums," explains Hewitt-Dutton. "But the one example of how good it can sound is Thelma Houston's album.

"It's got a purple cover, look it up. If you've not heard it or seen it, go get it. Go get the original album, because it sounds amazing. Apparently, that took about a week and a half [to record]. In the mid 70s, that was quite a long time to record an album.

"It was just endless rehearsals. They were practising again and again and again and again. If you're doing a full album, you could do three tracks as the best performance you've ever done of those three tracks, and then someone slips up on the fourth and you have to start the whole thing again."

So how exactly does a live-to-disc session work? Hewitt-Dutton explains that, before attempting to cut the lacquer, he would need to run through the performance a few times with the band to mix the audio in the

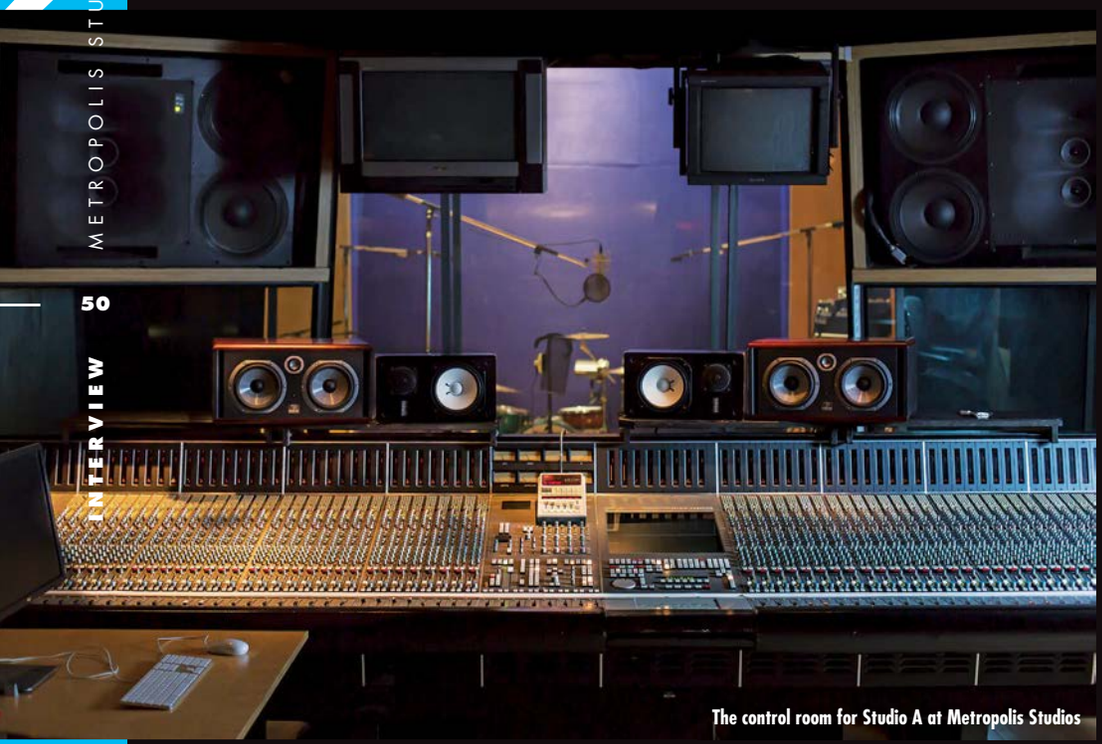
way they'd like it to be heard on the record. "We're getting that sound right from the start," he says. "We can talk to them about what we think is going on in the mix. You've got a mix engineer approaching it from one point of view, and we're mastering engineers looking at it from a different point of view.

"It becomes a collaborative thing, because when you're mastering for someone, you get the mixes at the end of the day. Here, we can go back and forth a lot. We'll be doing that for maybe two or three hours. They'll set up and tweak the mix and we can get our master ready at the same time."

Not only do the band and the engineers need to rehearse and set up everything properly in the mix, to ensure that the audio levels and the band's performance are on point, but Hewitt-Dutton says that getting it right is even more critical these days, to avoid damaging the fragile parts on the lathe. "If someone makes a massive noise on the mic that manages to get through all the compressors and everything, then you could blow the head up on the lathe quite easily," he says.

If the head on the lathe was damaged 40 years ago, you could send it back to Neumann and order a new one, he tells us, but that's just not possible anymore – due to the rarity of the machine, its parts and the people who know how to repair it.

"They don't do any of the servicing and they don't even have any of the machinery to do that stuff," he explains. "So we can't break any of the components. That's probably the bit that makes you the most nervous about it. These are completely irreplaceable now. They haven't been made since the early 80s and the components are very hard to come by."



The control room for Studio A at Metropolis Studios

A KIND OF MAGIC

"The people who repair them are also few and far between," Hewitt-Dutton continues. "You don't want to be responsible for breaking that as well as cocking up the recording, messing the band around and telling them to start again."

Another reason for recording live to vinyl is the art of capturing a one-off performance that might never be replicated again. "That's the idea, you want to capture that magic," says Hewitt-Dutton. "You want to get that magic take, that one that couldn't have been done overdubbed, that couldn't have been done any other way.

"And the musicians love it and we love it as well, because every now and then, you're going to get some magic and get that band that are just on it, playing in a way that they couldn't if they were overdubbing.

"Whether we've got that perfect piece in all of them or not, I don't know, but they've all sounded great from a technical point of view. And you genuinely get the feeling the musicians are having fun. But whether we've got that absolute piece of unrepeatable

"ONCE THE BAND'S FINISHED PLAYING, THE WHOLE SESSION'S FINISHED"

MAKING THE CUT

Peter Hewitt-Dutton has cut lacquers for the likes of The Rolling Stones: *Sweet Summer Sun – Hyde Park Live* and *…The Marquee Club Live In 1971*; Royal Blood's self-titled debut album; Public Enemy – *Live From Metropolis Studios* (at half speed) and Oasis' 2014 *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* reissue. Here, he tells us about cutting records by some of his favourite artists…

"There are a few records [you work on] that you kind of pinch yourself thinking, God yeah, I'm actually doing this! I grew up in my teenage years in the 90s, so I was a big fan of Blur, Oasis, the Manic Street Preachers and all those kinds of bands.

"I've cut quite a lot of Oasis and I've cut quite a lot of Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds stuff. I've also cut the recent Verve reissue. When you cut those albums you remember buying the first time round and were so excited about, the idea of cutting a 20th-anniversary reissue does make you feel a bit old, but at the same time, you're working on albums you loved when they came out. You can't really have that same attachment to something new that's coming through."

Bob Log III cutting live to vinyl at Metropolis in 2016

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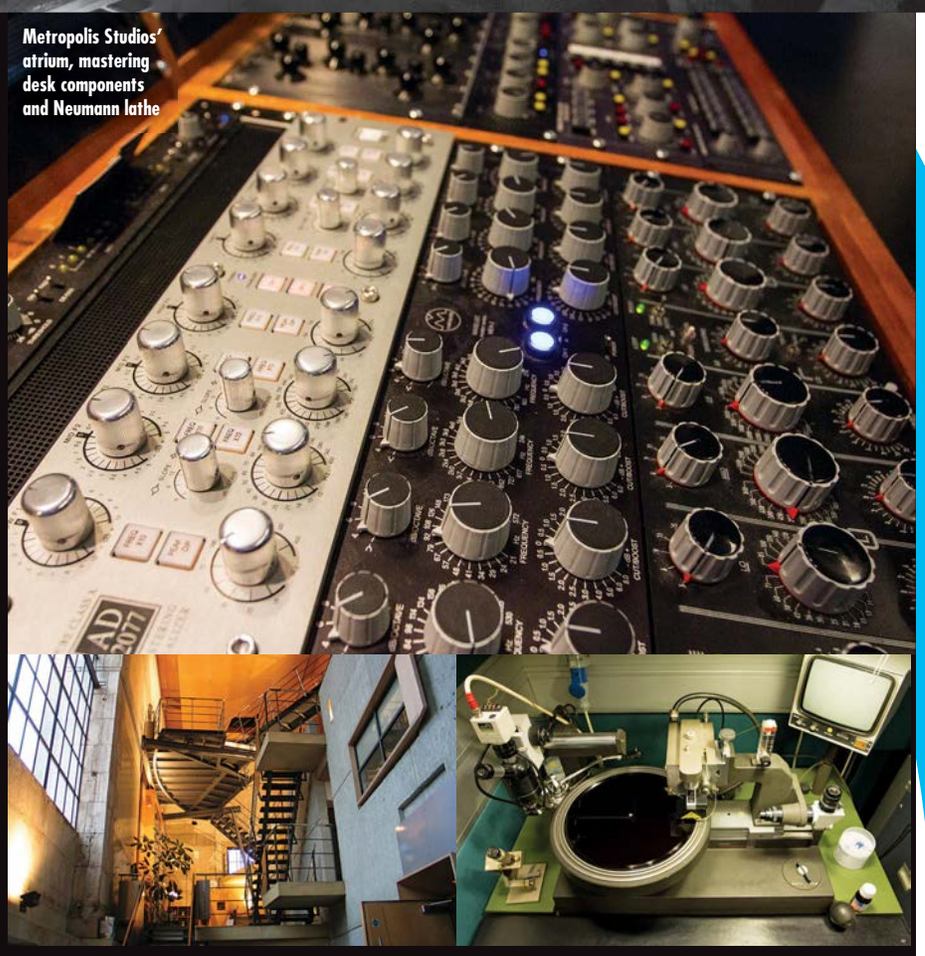
magic yet, I don't know. You never know when it's going to happen."

Metropolis was the location of a 2011 Channel 4 series called *On Track With SEAT*, which saw artists such as Kaiser Chiefs, Rizzle Kicks and others record straight to vinyl. "The idea behind it was that they got a different band each week, they'd come and do four tracks and do some interviews about the recording process. It went quite well. We did two series of that and there's continual talk of a third series. Some artists get a kick out of it, they like the idea of doing things that way."

With our conversation nearing its end and having learned a great deal more about recording music straight to vinyl, we ask Hewitt-Dutton if he's interested in taking on more direct-to-disc projects in spite of its challenges. "God yeah," he enthuses. "It doesn't even matter what it's for, really. It's surprising more people don't give it a go. It is just good fun and, in a lot of ways, it's a quicker way of recording, because by the time they've finished playing, the whole session's finished, that's it. There's nothing else to do. There's no arguing over the mix, there's no auto-tune on the vocals, there's no endless revisions in mastering. That's it – it's on the disc. Done. Finished." ●



Metropolis Studios' atrium, mastering desk components and Neumann lathe

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THE ESSENTIAL

The Beatles

Our series of extended delves into the back catalogues of classic artists and genres hits the mother lode, as **Rik Flynn** explores the musical wonders of the Fab Four – whose longevity and success makes them a dream for record collectors…

There are any number of lists that could be compiled to make up the ultimate Beatles collection, depending on musical preferences, collectability and country of origin, among various other factors. After all, this is The Beatles we're talking about. Without question, the biggest band in the world, ever. A group that laid down a catalogue of major-league material, a very large proportion of which is very much essential listening. And thanks to the perpetual popularity enjoyed by the talented Liverpudlians over the years, they are a record collector's dream. For example, those wishing to dish out serious dollar in order to compile the sort of 'Holy Grail' collection that would induce the green-eyed monster among even the most serious of vinyl hoarders, could choose to track down the rare US debut album *Introducing… The Beatles* out on Vee-Jay – of which fewer than 50 copies are known to exist, or seek out one of six ultra-rare and exalted 'Special DJ No. 8' promo pressings of *Ask Me Why/Anna*… but we don't want to send any of our readers into fits of invidiousness and instead, we've decided on a different approach here.

For our rundown of essential Beatles vinyl, arranged in chronological order, we've concentrated our efforts on UK releases alone, with a mixed assortment of singles, EPs, LPs and other collectibles, some of which are harder to come by, some that appear in various forms and with wildly different values – depending on all kinds of factors, and some that are simply damn fine records that any self-respecting music fan should have in their bag. From the early days of innocent pop ditties and fainting girls through to their fully fledged mastery of psychedelia, we cover The Beatles' entire catalogue and then some.

40 LOVE ME DO/ P.S. I LOVE YOU

PARLOPHONE 1962

Chirpy throwaway pop it may be, but peaking at No. 17 in the UK, The Beatles' first EMI single knocked confidently at the door. As with all Beatles collectibles, endless minutiae determine value – those with one of the 250 original UK first-issue red 'A' label 'Demonstration Record' white-label promos with 'Top Pop' sleeve (and 'Lennon-McArtney' mispelling) are in the money – up to £10,000. Regardless of version, the sounds captured within its grooves ushered in a bold new era for popular music.

39 PLEASE PLEASE ME/ASK ME WHY

PARLOPHONE 1963

On release, The Beatles' second attempt provided vindication for a band that some branded as one-hit wonders. The song was composed by John Lennon at his Aunt Mimi's house in Liverpool and – with a substantial tempo shift in the studio – this 'attempt at writing a Roy Orbison song' (with a nod to Bing Crosby's lyrics) soon flourished into a pop classic. Various versions exist, but first pressings (without 'Made in Gt. Britain' on the label) should fetch around £150, with promos commanding much more.

38 PLEASE PLEASE ME
PARLOPHONE 1963

Having whittled down the best of a live set honed on the stages of the Cavern Club and in Hamburg, sessions for The Beatles' debut finished in February 1963. The foursome included eight of their own compositions in a 14-track set. Plenty of options can entirely befuddle the un-savvy collector here, with mono and stereo versions, two distinct label colours, differing publishing credits and more, but vinyl addicts should seek out one of around 25,000 early pressings released with Parlophone's discontinued black-and-gold label.

36 SHE LOVES YOU/ I'LL GET YOU
PARLOPHONE 1963

Dreamt up in a Newcastle hotel room, completed at Paul's house, then recorded and released in the summer of 1963, this is a joyous sub-three-minute firecracker whose Abbey Road session was invaded by a screaming horde of female admirers. While initially dismissed by the *NME* as 'banal rubbish', this second UK No. 1 held off the competition for a glorious 15-week tenure and hooked the tricky American market while it was at it. Still the group's best-selling single, it can be snapped up for under a tenner.

34 I WANT TO HOLD YOUR HAND/ THIS BOY
PARLOPHONE 1963

As Christmas came into view, the Fabs unleashed another pop classic with their first four-track recording. Written as John proclaimed: "One-on-one, eyeball to eyeball" with McCartney, this 45 was made to suit the American market and soared to the top Stateside, sounding the bugle call for the British Invasion. Having dislodged *She Loves You* from the pinnacle, this UK Christmas No. 1 was also the first example of a band unsaddling themselves for the top spot.

37 FROM ME TO YOU/ THANK YOU GIRL
PARLOPHONE 1963

The Beatles' third single is another expertly crafted pop classic written – at the behest of George Martin – while on tour with Helen Shapiro and bound for Shrewsbury. It took just seven takes in the studio. "We weren't taking ourselves seriously, just fooling around on the guitar, when we began to get a good melody line, and we really started to work at it," remembered John. Scant media promo 45s mailed out by a press department eager to exploit their rising stars are worth a pretty penny.

35 TWIST AND SHOUT EP
PARLOPHONE 1963

The foursome's only No. 1 that was a cover, this hot-blooded remake shares its grooves with three other tracks here, with each spotlighting individual band members: Paul is the balladeer for *A Taste Of Honey*, George takes on *Do You Want To Know A Secret* and Paul and John unite for *There's A Place*. The results? 21 weeks at the top and over 800,000 sales, despite the tracks having already appeared on the *Please Please Me* LP. The UK picture-sleeve version is fairly common, but the ultra-rare Danish version has changed hands for over a grand.

33 WITH THE BEATLES
PARLOPHONE 1963

Issued just a week after *I Want To Hold Your Hand*, the Liverpudlians' second LP led to the press coining the phrase 'Beatlemania'. Televised performances at the London Palladium (with 15 million viewers) and at the Royal Command Performance added to the buzz. Lennon and McCartney were tasked to conjure up fresh songs and they delivered. Originals included *All My Loving*, *I Wanna Be Your Man* and *It Won't Be Long*. First pressings sell for around £100, but draw £200-plus with the Jobete Music publishing miscredit for *Money*.

32 CAN'T BUY ME LOVE/ YOU CAN'T DO THAT

PARLOPHONE 1964

With three million pre-orders, *Can't Buy Me Love* stole the final Top 5 Billboard spot not yet occupied by the band. The unprecedented ascendancy of this record-breaking platter was intensified by a highly anticipated debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show* a few weeks earlier, beamed into millions of American homes. Paul was the main brain behind this one, recorded off the back of a gruelling 18-date residency in Paris. US copies with picture sleeve raise between $200 and $1,000, while UK pressings are under a tenner.

30 A HARD DAY'S NIGHT/THINGS WE SAID TODAY

PARLOPHONE 1964

Lennon may have written this million-seller, but it was George Harrison's 12-string Rickenbacker that gave the song its unique character – and the make-up of that collective opening chord has been deliberated over by fans ever since. "We knew it would open both the film and the soundtrack LP," remembered George Martin of the intro. "So we wanted a particularly strong and effective beginning." It was the perfect launch… Original copies of the single sell for £20.

28 HELP!

PARLOPHONE 1965

The fifth Beatles' LP and the film soundtrack for *Help!* straddled two worlds: the Mop Tops of old fighting to be heard over the screams and a new experimental phase being ushered in. Mid-recording, they discovered they were to be awarded MBEs, plus they were shooting *Help!* everywhere from Salisbury Plain to The Bahamas. The soundtrack featured 14 songs: 10 from Lennon-McCartney, two from Harrison, and two covers. Indian influences, percussion and instrumentation pulled in a seductive new direction. It'll cost you £20-40.

31 A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

PARLOPHONE 1964

The Ed Sullivan Show had put The Beatles on the map in the US and despite a world tour, more recording and concurrent promotional chaos, they found time to make a film. With four-track recording allowing overdubs, and with their first entirely original set of songs, this was sure to be an exceptional soundtrack. Titled after an off-the-cuff 'Ringoism', the LP featured a host of Beatles classics – McCartney's *And I Love Her* and *Can't Buy Me Love*, plus Lennon's No. 1 title track. Various early pressings range from around £70 to over £300.

29 THE BEATLES' MILLION SELLERS EP

PARLOPHONE 1965

Released amid a Christmas flurry of Beatles products, this curio gathered four of their five early million-selling hits: *She Loves You* and *I Want To Hold Your Hand* on one side and *Can't Buy Me Love* and *I Feel Fine* on the other. It served to underline just how much ground the band had gained since those innocent beginnings, yet the EP reached No.1 just two months after its December release. Spend £30-60 to snag the initial – and rarer – withdrawn *Beatles' Golden Discs* version.

27 RUBBER SOUL

PARLOPHONE 1965

Hastily recorded in a month – in time for Christmas – the group's sixth UK album stretched the limits of their sound. Lighter moments remained, such as *Drive My Car* and *Michelle*, but alongside those came more weighty material: Lennon's *Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)* with its exotic sitar, and *In My Life*, which he described as his "first real major piece of work". A stereo factory sample sold in 2013 for £2,839, Greek copies fetch £2,000+, while UK first pressings (with silver 'stereo' on the sleeve) can go for around £1,000.

26 WE CAN WORK IT OUT/DAY TRIPPER

PARLOPHONE 1965

The Beatles' sixth million-seller was laid down during the *Rubber Soul* sessions and was released simultaneously with the LP. Lennon wanted his own *Day Tripper* to be the A-side, while the others sided with Lennon-McCartney co-write *We Can Work It Out*. The compromise? The band were amongst the first to pioneer the double A-side single. Find a Parlophone demo version – with red 'A' on the label – at the car boot and count your blessings: around £500-700 is good, but they have sold for up to £5,000.

24 A COLLECTION OF BEATLES OLDIES (BUT GOLDIES!)

PARLOPHONE 1966

This was the first official Beatles 'Greatest Hits' album, released to satisfy the fans' hunger over the Christmas period. With the exception of Larry Williams' *Bad Boy*, the compilation included nothing new: *She Loves You*, *Help!*, *I Want To Hold Your Hand*, *Yesterday*, *Day Tripper*, *Michelle*, *Yellow Submarine* and a newly stereo version of *Paperback Writer* all featured. Deleted in the late 80s, the first pressing can raise up to £400; later issues cost around £20.

22 REVOLVER

PARLOPHONE 1966

The Beatles' seventh UK LP marked a sea change for the band: from the live feel of old to a studio-savvy outfit willing to push boundaries. Lennon's Christian-baiting headlines had stirred the nest, various exploratory drugs were on the menu and touring was (almost) a thing of the past. Unusually, for *Revolver*, the band entered the studio with a set of entirely their own compositions; Lennon's *Tomorrow Never Knows*, Paul's *Eleanor Rigby*, plus three tracks from George, with *Taxman* chosen as the album's opener. One of their finest works.

25 YESTERDAY EP

PARLOPHONE 1966

Released on the same day the *Evening Standard* published its "more popular than Jesus" Lennon interview, this EP was a cash-in on what had fast become a favourite from the recent *Help!* LP. Still, it's a vital waxing, not least because *Yesterday* was possibly McCartney's finest achievement, but also thanks to its plattermates, all of which were fronted by a different Beatle. The EP, with Robert Whitaker's much-aped portrait on the cover, spent six weeks at No. 1. A near-mint first pressing recently scored £200, but £100 should bag a decent copy.

23 YELLOW SUBMARINE/ ELEANOR RIGBY

PARLOPHONE 1966

A lighter moment on the *Revolver* LP, *Yellow Submarine* has been subjected to wild interpretations involving everything from drugs to war, but, as Paul explained: "There's nothing more to be read into it than there is in the lyrics of any children's song." In marked contrast, *Eleanor Rigby* was string-laden, refined pop, pioneering in both its arrangement and production. Plenty of accolades followed the release of this double-A – Grammy nominations, an Ivor Novello and a UK No. 1. It costs around £20.

21 PAPERBACK WRITER/RAIN

PARLOPHONE 1966

Paperback Writer was conceived in McCartney's car and finished off with Lennon. The influence of The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* is present, but its eccentric lyrical structure and thumping bass is thoroughly British. Lennon's psychedelic *Rain* was on the B-side and is – according to Lennon – the first track to feature backwards vocals. The group mimed both sides for their first *Top Of The Pops* performance in June 1966. Demo vinyl versions go for around £1,000; original issues regularly fetch over £100.

20 NOWHERE MAN EP

PARLOPHONE 1966

Lennon's raw, existential lyrics cut to the bone, while harmonies play off one another and Fender Stratocasters sing to reach sonic Valhalla – and all born from Lennon retiring to bed with writer's block during the *Revolver* sessions only to quickly dream up *Nowhere Man* in its entirety. The song also features in the band's 1968 *Yellow Submarine* animation. Add *Drive My Car*, *Michelle* and *You Won't See Me* – all from *Revolver* – plus a great sleeve, and it's a highlight from their mid-60s period; a first pressing can be yours for £150.

18 SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND

PARLOPHONE 1967

An LP that changed the world's view of albums – and music. Beneath the experimentation is a flush of serious songs made by the band at the peak of their collaborative powers, aided by musicians who supplied everything from french horn and bassoon to Indian dilruba and swarmandal. Highlights extend from the brassy title track to the eccentric pop of *When I'm Sixty-Four* and the closing, slanted hysteria of *A Day In The Life*. The Fab Four in full force.

16 HELLO, GOODBYE/ I AM THE WALRUS

PARLOPHONE 1967

While one of the more simplistic in his canon, *Hello, Goodbye* is a worthy addition to McCartney's varied output. Lennon wasn't a fan, calling it "three minutes of contradictions and meaningless juxtapositions" – clearly unhappy that *I Am The Walrus* played the supporting role – but nonetheless, No. 1 was reached on both sides of the pond – no mean feat. A suitably simplistic video accompanies the single. Green-and-white-labelled demos cost over £200, while first issues can be found for £10-15.

19 MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR EP

PARLOPHONE 1967

Two weeks before the band's *Magical Mystery Tour* film, the accompanying EP arrived. Comprising six new tracks, this 'Double EP' was a relative innovation: two 7" vinyl discs, in a luxurious gatefold with a 28-page booklet containing lyrics, photos from the film production and cartoons by Bob Gibson. The critics panned the film, but *Hello, Goodbye* kept the EP off the top spot. First pressings fetch around £100-200 – while a sealed, original US LP will cost up to $2,500.

17 STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER/ PENNY LANE

PARLOPHONE 1967

Perhaps the greatest single ever released, Lennon's psychedelic masterstroke *Strawberry Fields* was written while filming in Spain, but the inspiration came from the Salvation Army children's home near his childhood house (the home demo is on *Anthology 2*). The jubilant pop of *Penny Lane* came from Paul, inspired by a bus depot in Liverpool. A first pressing of the rare 'wavy top' picture sleeve (only 250,000 were issued in the UK) will cost around £40-80.

15 ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE/BABY YOU'RE A RICH MAN

PARLOPHONE 1967

One of the band's more iconic No. 1 singles, *All You Need Is Love* was initially composed by Lennon specifically for TV special *Our World*, the world's first live satellite link-up that featured 25 countries and a massive worldwide audience. The band performed surrounded by famous friends, including Mick Jagger, Marianne Faithfull, Keith Moon and Eric Clapton. Various more expensive variants are in circulation, but the single can be picked up for £20.

14 HEY JUDE/ REVOLUTION

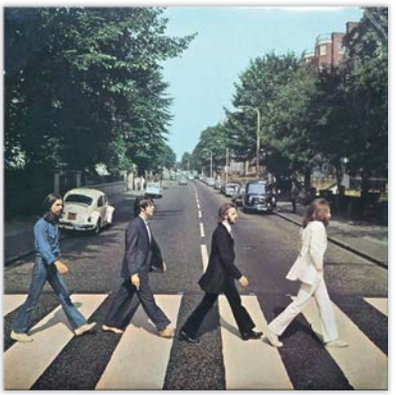
APPLE, 1968

Inspired by Lennon's son Julian, the beginnings of (arguably) The Beatles' most famous tune came to McCartney while driving to visit Lennon's recently estranged wife Cynthia. Lennon was an instant fan and the song was chosen as the inaugural release on the band's new Apple label. A simple promo video was filmed in front of an audience at Twickenham Film Studios a few months after the recording. It spent nine weeks at the top of the US charts and two at the UK pinnacle. First pressings can sell for up to £150.

12 YELLOW SUBMARINE

APPLE 1969

Just six Beatles tracks – four of which were new – featured on the original pressing of the soundtrack to the animated film of the same name. The bulk of the grooves were taken up by music from the film performed by the George Martin Orchestra. The later *Yellow Submarine Songtrack* – remixed and remastered – ditches the orchestra. *Yellow Submarine* and *All You Need Is Love* appear here, as does *Only A Northern Song*, bashed out by George Harrison in super-quick time. Original UK issues sell for up to £70.



10 ABBEY ROAD LP

APPLE 1969

While released a year before *Let It Be*, this was the group's true closing statement. Containing Lennon's *Come Together*, Harrison's masterpiece *Something*, Paul's lilting *Oh! Darling* and the wonderful eccentricity of *Octopus's Garden*, to many, *Abbey Road* is their crowning achievement. Flip it over for an ambitious medley, begun by *Here Comes The Sun*. Its famous zebra-crossing sleeve photo also ensured Abbey Road Studios' iconic status. Rarities include an abandoned picture disc and a green-vinyl export; a clean original is £30.

13 THE BEATLES

APPLE 1968

Recorded amid the doom and gloom of rising band politics, the infamous 'White Album', as it is universally known, still manages to soar skyward, albeit via a slightly less unified forward momentum. The squabbles served to separate the sum of the band's parts, with individualistic offerings revealing how talented each member really was. The individually numbered first pressings are worth a bomb (£10,000-plus), while Ringo Starr's 0000001 copy sold for $790,000, the highest price ever paid for a commercially released album.

11 SOMETHING/ COME TOGETHER

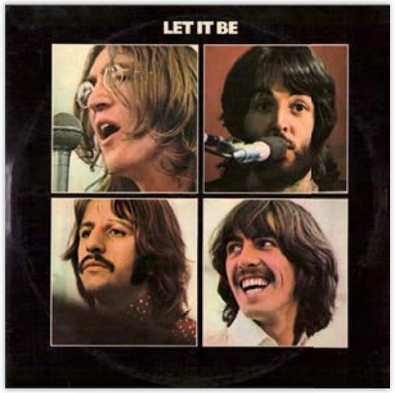
APPLE 1969

Harrison's first A-side is also one of the most-covered Beatles tracks, and B-side *Come Together* is up there, too. Mostly from Lennon, *Come Together* was initially commissioned to be the campaign song for Timothy Leary's ultimately aborted attempt to become governor of California. *Something* made US No. 1 and UK No. 4, and its plattermate sets the *Abbey Road* LP in glorious motion. First pressings go for £40-50, but the rarer demo version with green label commands up to £5,000.

9 BALLAD OF JOHN AND YOKO/ OLD BROWN SHOE

APPLE 1969

The first of The Beatles' songs issued in stereo, this was penned by John while honeymooning in Paris; its jovial mood contrasting with the treatment the couple were receiving from the press. Recorded hastily by just John and Paul, it's ostensibly Lennon solo, with Paul providing much of the instrumentation. Tellingly, this was the last Beatles No. 1, and also includes Harrison's inventive blues, *Old Brown Shoe*. First pressings fetch upwards of £30; the picture sleeve version goes for more.



8 LET IT BE
APPLE 1970

The band's final act was intended as a fresh start. Instead, it was a disaster culminating in abandoned sessions and reels and reels of tape. While The Beatles began work on *Abbey Road*, Glyn Johns was tasked to fathom a complete LP, but a year and two refusals later, Lennon had passed the tapes to Phil Spector. George Martin joked that the credits should have been "Produced by George Martin, overproduced by Phil Spector," but it still has *The Long And Winding Road*, *Get Back*, *Across The Universe* and the hymn-like title track.

7 LET IT BE/YOU KNOW MY NAME (LOOK UP THE NUMBER)
APPLE 1970

This timeless McCartney ballad, inspired by a dream, announced the end for The Beatles. Paul started to write the song during the 'White Album' sessions. Lennon, it seems, wasn't a fan. "I don't know what he's thinking when he writes *Let It Be*," Lennon said. "I think it was inspired by *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. That's my feeling, although I have nothing to go on. I know he wanted to write a *Bridge Over Troubled Water*." It's £20 for a decent copy.

6 ROCK 'N' ROLL MUSIC
EMI, 1976

EMI issued this rare white-label 7" as a promotional single for the band's forthcoming *Rock 'N' Roll Music* double album. While one side houses 11 sonic snippets edited into a continuous medley that features *I Saw Her Standing There*, *Back In The USSR* and *Get Back*, the other is just a monotonous 'test tone'. The real deal can be identified via the matrix numbers on both sides ('SPSR 401' on the A-side and 'LPFB' on the B-side); worth checking considering the hefty price tag: one sold for £850 in 2015 and another for £450 in 2017.

Rare Cuts

The Fab Four's catalogue is studded with rarities – particularly from the early days

There are plenty of other rare Beatles waxings to get excited about. For one, the band's US Capitol album *Yesterday And Today* that has four different versions of the sleeve, varying 'original' releases and versions that were both stereo, mono and both, as well as 'fake' stereo. Find a sealed mint condition stereo 'first state' copy (featuring the banned 'Butcher's' sleeve, untouched) and it's worth plenty – Heritage Auctions sold one in 2017 for $125,000. Unsealed copies still draw $15,000 plus. Then there's the fabled 10" acetate of *Till There Was You/Hello Little Girl*, The Beatles' first acetate recording and the demo used to secure their EMI contract. Les Maguire of Gerry And The Pacemakers got hold of it in 1963 and it remained wrapped up in his loft for over five decades, until he gave it to his granddaughter. Eventually put under the hammer, the record sold in March 2016 for £77,500.

Also desirable is The Beatles' first commercially available 1962 release, backing up Tony Sheridan on 45 *My Bonnie* b/w *The Saints*. The group had played with Sheridan while gigging at the Star Club in Hamburg and recorded the song in 1961 while still in Germany – at Hamburg's Friedrich-Ebert-Halle school. The song made No. 5 in Germany, as 'Tony Sheridan And The Beat Brothers'. Notably, it was this very disc that brought the band to the attention of Brian Epstein. It's valued at around £10,000.

5 THE BEATLES AT THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL

PARLOPHONE 1977

The Beatles' only live album shows they knew how to rock. In 1964, Capitol Records failed to secure permissions to record the Fab Four's show at Carnegie Hall and their recordings of three further sets at LA's Hollywood Bowl were deemed below par. The tapes lay undisturbed until 1971, when Phil Spector was briefly involved, but further dust gathered until the George Martin-produced release. It was remixed, remastered and given four new tracks for a 2016 re-release.

4 PAST MASTERS VOLUMES ONE & TWO

PARLOPHONE 1988

While our interest lies in the double-LP version, these late-80s compilations led the charge of blanket Beatles releases on CD. Featuring all the early standalone singles, B-sides, EP tracks and rarities, it's a one-stop shop – *Vol. One* covers '62 to '65, while *Vol. Two* covers '65 to '70. *Vol. One* includes *Love Me Do* with Ringo on drums, *Bad Boy*, two German-language tracks, plus the *Long Tall Sally* EP, and *Vol. 2* delivers an early charity-LP version of *Across The Universe*. Sealed, mint first pressings cost £200.

3 THE BEATLES LIVE AT THE BBC

APPLE 1994

The Beatles cut tracks for over 50 BBC programmes until the mid 60s, such was their desire to be heard on the airwaves – these programmes ranged from *Teenager's Turn: Here We Go* in 1962 to *The Beatles Invite You To Take A Ticket To Ride* in 1965. While a few originals feature, the majority of the near-70 tracks here were from the group's live set. The first pressing of the album – on double vinyl – was released back in the mid 90s, and £40 should be enough to add it to your collection.

2 ANTHOLOGY 1, 2 AND 3

APPLE 1995/6

When George Martin headed up the *Beatles Anthology* project, his aim was to: "Tell the story of The Beatles' lives in music, from the moment they met to the moment they split up". As well as a documentary and book, there was also a trilogy of albums, featuring a mouthwatering miscellany of unreleased material, outtakes, interview clips, intimate studio patter and more, plus live performances, including some with original members, Stuart Sutcliffe and Pete Best. Add two Lennon demos reworked into full productions posthumously – *Free As A Bird* and a second 45 *Real Love*, plus a third abandoned demo *Now And Then* – and it's a shoo-in here.

1

APPLE 2000

Issued on the 30th anniversary of their split, The Beatles' 2000 compilation of 27 No. 1 hits (from the UK and US) was always going to fly off the shelves – in fact, it's one of the Top 10 unit-shifters of the century in the UK. Together with the remaining members, fifth Beatle George Martin took the helm once more. While the omission of *Please, Please Me* (it missed UK No. 1 in some charts) is understandable, not including *Strawberry Fields Forever* seems plain wrong. Still, the iconic sleeve houses the opportunity to trace the band's career from the wet-behind-the-ears Merseybeat of their early hits to *Hey Jude* in its full seven-minute glory. It'll set you back around £25 for a clean copy. ●

Classic Album
INNERVISIONS
STEVIE WONDER

Contractual freedom and a burning sense of social injustice fuelled the creation of 1973's *Innervisions*, Stevie Wonder's 16th album, which captures him at the absolute peak of his powers. As **Neil Crossley** explains, it is Wonder's enduring masterpiece and regarded as one of the greatest albums in pop history…

STEVIE WONDER INNERVISIONS
TAMLA

INNER VISIONARY

The album's mystical cover illustration, in which Stevie Wonder is depicted as an all-seeing godhead, was created by Efram Wolff, whose illustration work was a fixture in print and on record sleeves during the early 1970s.

THE WONDER STUFF

Even after 15 albums, Stevie was clearly still at the peak of his powers. He not only wrote all of the songs, but he was the sole musician on many of them, too – including his classic tracks Living For The City and Higher Ground.

DREAM THEMES

The album's songs deal with a diverse range of themes, including civil rights and inner-city violence, Eastern mysticism and spirituality, the political scandal surrounding Richard Nixon and drug abuse – to name just a handful.

FUTURE PERFECT

Stevie set out on his sonic odyssey with then-cutting-edge Moog synths on 1972's Music Of My Mind. The electronic theme continued here, with ARP, Moog, Oberheim and other modules fused together to become the monstrous TONTO modular synth.

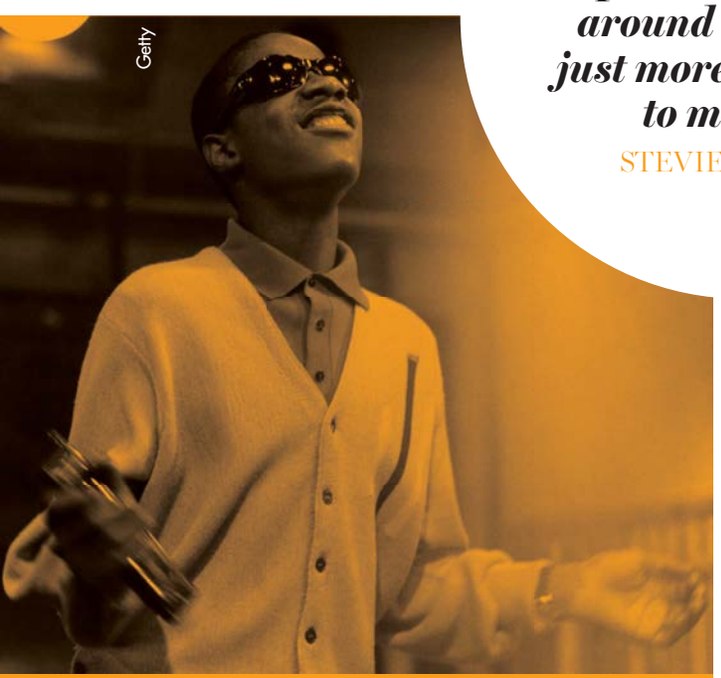
On the evening of 6 August 1973, Stevie Wonder was asleep in the front passenger seat of a car driven by his friend John Harris, just outside Durham, North Carolina. The 23-year-old musical prodigy had just played a concert in Greenville, South Carolina. Without warning, a truck stacked full of huge logs in front of their car braked suddenly, causing the vehicles to collide and sending one of the logs through the car windscreen straight into Wonder's forehead.

His bloody, unconscious body was pulled from the car and rushed to hospital in Winston-Salem, where he lay in a coma for four days. When all efforts to elicit a response from Wonder failed, his friend and tour director Ira Tucker Jr suggested to doctors that he sing loudly into Wonder's ear.

"I knew that he likes to listen to music really loud and I thought maybe if I shouted in his ear, it might reach him," recalled Tucker. "The doctor told me to go ahead and try, it couldn't hurt him. The first time I didn't get any response, but the next day, I went back and I got right down in his ear and sang *Higher Ground*. His hand was resting on my arm and after a while his fingers started going in time with the song. I said: 'Yeah, yeah! This dude is going to make it.'" Wonder's recovery was long and slow, and he became convinced that this had been no 'accident'.

Getty

"The accident opened my ears up to many things around me. Life is just more important to me now"
STEVIE WONDER


Getty

TOP RIGHT
Stevie and Marvin Gaye recording at Motown in Detroit in 1965

"Everything that ever happened to me is the way it is supposed to have been," he told *The New York Times*. "The accident opened my ears up to many things around me. Naturally, life is just more important to me now… and what I do with my life."

The song *Higher Ground* that Tucker bellowed into his ear in the hospital was from Wonder's new album *Innervisions*, released just three days before the accident, on 3 August 1973. It was his 16th album and the one that concluded the transition from 'Little Stevie' – the child prodigy schooled through the slick professionalism of the Motown label – to the grown-up artist with a vibrant imagination and a burning social conscience. As he told one journalist months before the LP release: "We as a people are not interested in 'baby, baby' songs any more, there's more to life than that."

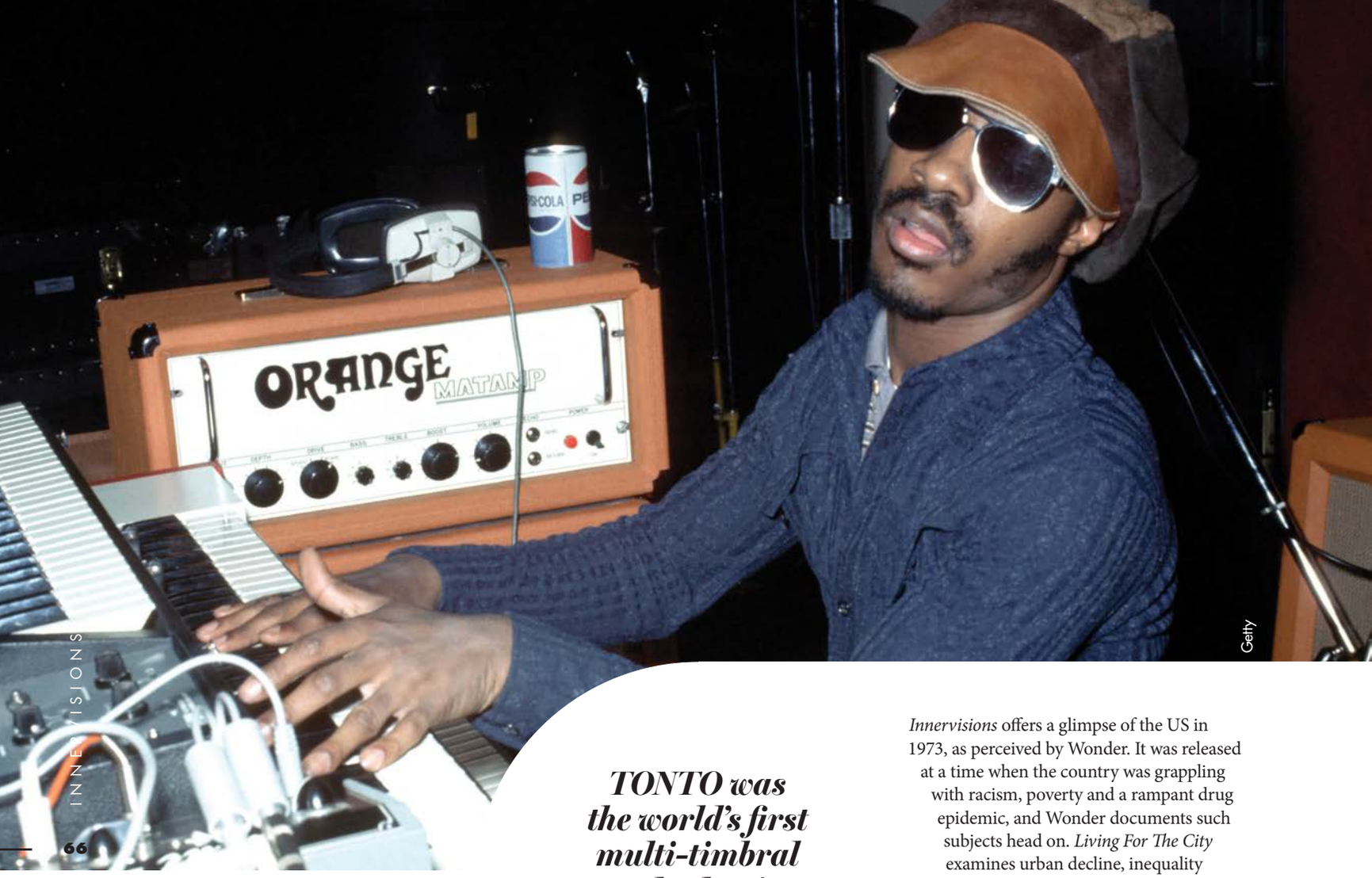
Wonder was inspired by Marvin Gaye's album *What's Going On*, the sociopolitical message of which was a significant departure from Motown's pop-soul. Wonder, too, wanted to carve out a new creative path, away from what he saw as the confines of the Motown label. When his contract came up for renewal on his 21st birthday, in May, 1971, he seized the opportunity.

CREATIVE CONTROL

Motown founder and CEO Berry Gordy was convinced that Wonder would leave the label for a far more attractive offer. In the event, he didn't. He signed a new contract with Motown's Tamla label. But the terms he negotiated were way beyond what the label had expected. "I thought, 'He's going to go out and get bids from other companies'," recalled Berry Gordy on ITV's *The South Bank Show* profile of Stevie

Commercial Fallout

Innervisions **became the first R&B album to be named Album Of The Year at the Grammy Awards in 1974. The album reached No. 4 in the *Billboard* album charts, and spent 89 weeks in the *Billboard* Top 200. It was also Wonder's second consecutive soul album to top the Black Albums chart, where it remained for two weeks. In the UK, the album became Wonder's first full-length release to reach the UK Top 10, peaking at No. 8.**



Getty

TONTO was the world's first multi-timbral polyphonic analogue synth – it was 20ft in diameter and 6ft tall

Wonder in October 1993. "It just turned out Stevie wanted to show me that he's 21 now and he wanted more respect. And he ended up making me pay $13m to sign another whole new contract with him."

The resulting 120-page contract gave Wonder complete creative control and a much higher royalty rate. Reaching his 21st birthday also meant that the money held in trust for Motown's 'Little Stevie' was now legally his, and he had the financial autonomy to pursue his creative goals.

CHILD PRODIGY

It was a defining moment for the man born Stevland Hardaway Judkins in Saginaw Michigan on 13 May, 1950. He was born six weeks premature and became blind due to the oxygen-rich atmosphere in the incubator, causing a condition called retinopathy of prematurity (ROP).

A natural multi-instrumentalist, he signed to Motown in 1961 and scored hits such as *Uptight (Everything's Alright)*, *For Once In My Life* and *Signed, Sealed, Delivered I'm Yours*. His cowriting credits at Motown included *Tears Of A Clown* for Smokey Robinson & The Miracles. But by 1970, he was keen to write songs that "touched on the problems of the world". By the time he renegotiated his contract with Motown in 1971, Wonder was hitting a rich seam of songwriting, fuelled by the social injustices he experienced around him. *Innervisions* closed a trilogy of albums that began with 1972's *Music Of My Mind* and continued with *Talking Book*, released the same year.

Innervisions* saw Wonder delve deep into the synth sounds he'd explored on preceding albums *Music Of My Mind* and *Talking Book

Innervisions offers a glimpse of the US in 1973, as perceived by Wonder. It was released at a time when the country was grappling with racism, poverty and a rampant drug epidemic, and Wonder documents such subjects head on. *Living For The City* examines urban decline, inequality and racism; *Too High* focuses on drug addiction; while *He's Misstra Know-It-All* is a scathing attack on the US president at the time, Richard Nixon.

Sound-wise, too, Wonder was stretching himself creatively, with the ARP synthesiser being used prominently throughout the album. "The ARP synthesiser is in a sense spiritual for me," he explained in 1972. The instrument enabled musicians to construct a complete sound environment and Wonder was the first black artist to fully utilise this technology. He was also aided in the studio by a fruitful collaboration with British-American electronica pioneers Malcolm Cecil and Robert Margouleff, who had recorded two albums under the name Tonto's Expanding Head Band.

MEETING OF MINDS

The duo's stage name referred to 'TONTO', an acronym for 'The Original New Timbral Orchestra'. Created over several years by Cecil, it was the first multi-timbral polyphonic analogue synthesiser in the world. Tonto was also rather big – 20ft in diameter and 6ft tall – and was contained in a semicircle of elaborate wooden cabinets. Sonically, it was like nothing else before it, and was capable of generating a startling range of electronic sounds.

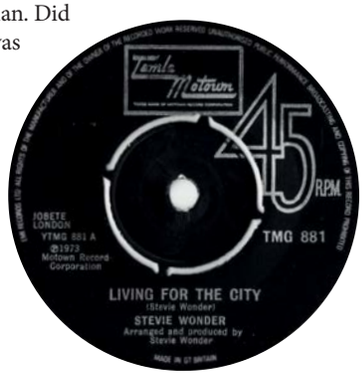
Cecil and Margouleff housed TONTO in the Electric Lady studio in New York's Greenwich Village. It was here that Stevie Wonder first encountered this synth, which would feature on *Music Of My Mind*, *Talking Book* and *Innervisions*. His interest had been piqued by *Zero Time*, an album recorded by Cecil and Margouleff that was played

entirely on the multi-timbral synth. On 20 May, 1971, while visiting New York shortly after his 21st birthday, an intrigued Wonder went to pay Cecil a visit.

"I heard a ring at the door, and as usual, I stuck my head out of the window to see who it was," Cecil told Chris Williams of *Wax Poetics* magazine. "It was my friend Ronnie Blanco standing there with this black guy in a pistachio jumpsuit, who seemed to be holding our album underneath his arm.

"I walked down the three-flight walk-up and I opened the door, and Ronnie said: 'This is Stevie Wonder. He wants to see the synthesiser'. Stevie asked me: 'Hey, man. Did you make this album?'. I said: 'Yes, I did. It was me and my partner Bob'. And he said: 'Hey, man. Is this a keyboard instrument?'. I told him: 'Yes, it has a keyboard and knobs and lots of patchcords'. He said: 'Show me.'"

Cecil escorted Wonder to Electric Lady, where he led him over to the instrument and placed his hands over the keys. "He tried to play it, but he couldn't get it to sound like a normal keyboard, because in those days, you could only get



Getty

Seminal Synth

The TONTO multi-timbral polyphonic analogue synthesiser used on *Innervisions* was created over three years by Malcolm Cecil, associate producer on the album. It started life as a Moog Modular Synthesizer Series III, before a second Moog III was added, followed swiftly by four Oberheim SEMs, two ARP 2600s, plus several custom modules designed by Cecil and US composer and electronic-instrument builder, Serge Tcherepnin. Digital sound-generation circuitry and a collection of sequencers were also added, along with MIDI control.

The songs

Core personnel

All songs written, produced and arranged by **Stevie Wonder**

Stevie Wonder *Vocals, Fender Rhodes, piano, harmonica, drums, Moog bass, TONTO synthesiser, Hohner clavinet, congas, handclaps*
Robert Margouleff, Malcolm Cecil *Associate producers, programming of ARP and Moog synthesisers*

Main production credits

Record Plant studios, *Los Angeles*
Mediasound studios, *New York City*
Released *3 August 1973*
George Marino *Mastering*
Dan Barbiero, Austin Godsey *Recordists*
Gary Olazabal *Tape operator*
George Marino *Mastering*
John Harris, Ira Tucker Jr *Recording coordinators*

1 *TOO HIGH*

Stevie Wonder *Lead vocal, Fender Rhodes, harmonica, drums, Moog bass*
Lani Groves *Backing vocals*
Tasha Thomas *Backing vocals*
Jim Gilstrap *Backing vocals*

Originally entitled *Too High To Touch The Sky*, the lyrics of this opening track focus on drug addiction. The track was recorded on 17 April 1972, with the final mix taking place one week later. Despite the subject matter, it has an upbeat feel, with Wonder's drumming laying down a strong, sparse groove, and his hi-hat work underpinning the track's signature descending doo-wop backing vocals. At its heart, this is jazz, with layers of voices and building chords lending the track a real fluidity and power.

"I was talking to Stevie, telling him about the different ways he could build chords," said Malcolm Cecil, credited along with Robert Margouleff for associate production, programming and engineering on the album. "We were talking about building chords in fourths and fifths. It was really jazzy. I was doing chromatic movements, and he just took it to a whole other place. He got it right away, and then he gave it to the girls to sing as a vocal, which is something I would've never thought of."

2 *VISIONS*

Stevie Wonder *Lead vocal, Fender Rhodes*
Malcolm Cecil *Upright bass*
Dean Parks *Acoustic guitar*
David T Walker *Electric guitar*

Written for his wife Syreeta and recorded live in one take on 17 January 1973, this mellow jazz-infused track finds Wonder invoking a plea for a better world. *Visions* has a laidback, ephemeral feel and, as ever with Stevie Wonder, the chord structures are inspired.

Wonder has suggested that this may be the favourite of all his songs. In lesser hands, it could be perceived as meandering – lightweight, even – but there is a

The songs *continued*

mastery to the composition and its place in the running order provides a sense of reflection, before the storming *Living For The City*.

3 LIVING FOR THE CITY

Stevie Wonder *Lead vocal, background vocals, Fender Rhodes, drums, Moog bass, TONTO synthesiser, handclaps*

"The most compelling, pounding, throbbing, unyielding beat to be heard anywhere at all," concluded *Rolling Stone* critic Jon Landau of *Living For The City*, the true centrepiece of this album. Clocking in at 7:22, the track unfolds like a cinematic epic, recounting a tale of exploitation and injustice as a young man from the rural Deep South descends into a life of crime in New York. "To find a job is like a haystack needle/ Cause where he lives they don't use coloured people," sings Wonder with urgency: the anger and conviction in his voice was fuelled by Margouleff and Cecil in the studio. "We kept on stopping the tape to get him angry," recalls Cecil. "We also recorded this hoarseness in his voice. We kept recording the same take over and over again, saying: 'Come on Stevie, you can do better than that'."

Wonder played every instrument on this track, which is one of the most successful of his career. Street sounds and sirens are blended into the mix, lending the themes of urban conflict and racism an extra resonance. In the hands of anyone else, the audio montage could seem like an affectation, but with an artist of Wonder's calibre, it rings true.

4 GOLDEN LADY

Stevie Wonder *Lead vocal, piano, Fender Rhodes, drums, Moog bass, TONTO synthesiser*
Clarence Bell *Hammond organ*
Ralph Hammer *Acoustic guitar*
Larry 'Nastyee' Latimer *Congas*

It's a testament to the thematic diversity of *Innervisions* that the first conventionally themed song – a romantic ballad – only makes an appearance at the conclusion of Side One. Sparse, mellow piano intros the track before a bass groove, some gentle guitar chords, drums and congas kick in. As with all great artists, Wonder recognises the importance of space within arrangements, and the synths and Clarence Bell's Hammond-organ work weave seamlessly together.

After the urban grit and poignancy of *Living For The City*, Wonder's optimism is restored for this track as a joyous outpouring. "And it's so clear to me that you're a dream come true/ There's no way that I'll be losing," intones Wonder, over some typically sublime chord progressions.

According to Malcolm Cecil, the drums took up five tracks in the mix. A defining element of the song is the conga playing from Larry 'Nastyee' Latimer.

5 HIGHER GROUND

Stevie Wonder *Lead vocal, Hohner clavinet, drums, Moog bass, tambourine, handclaps*

Direct and punchy, the sheer funky exuberance of *Higher Ground* is given added resonance because it was the track sung to Wonder while he was in a coma following a car accident. When the comatose Wonder responded to hearing the song by gently tapping his fingers, those around him in the hospital knew there was a chance he'd survive.

Higher Ground subsequently took on profound importance for Wonder, who seemed to perceive it as a portent, particularly as the lyrics came to him so quickly. "I did the whole thing in three hours," he told *Q* magazine. "It was almost as if I had to get it done. I felt something was going to happen. I didn't know what or when, but I felt something."

A Hohner clavinet, played through a Mu-Tron III envelope-filter pedal, is used by Wonder for the keyboard stabs that propel the infectious groove along. Unsurprisingly, the lyrics deal with getting a second chance and making the most of life – "I'm so glad that he let me try it again/ 'cause my last time on earth I lived a whole world of sin" – but it's also a politicised call to action. "Powers keep on lyin'/ While your people keep on dyin'," sings Wonder.

6 JESUS CHILDREN OF AMERICA

Stevie Wonder *Lead vocal, background vocal, Fender Rhodes, Hohner clavinet, handclaps, tambourine, drums, Moog bass*

A deep, rolling soul-funk groove defines this track which, four-and-a-half decades on, sounds contemporary and fresh. Two Hohner clavinets, one Fender Rhodes and a Moog bass drive the track, which was recorded on 28 March 1973. This is one of the six songs on which Wonder plays all the instruments, and *Jesus Children Of America* was laid down in one session with vocals added on 3 April 1973. In some ways, the upbeat mood masks the lyrical intent of the song, which focuses on the power of spirituality.

7 ALL IN LOVE IS FAIR

Stevie Wonder *Lead vocal, piano, Fender Rhodes, drums*
Scott Edwards *Electric bass*

In the midst of the versatility of *Innervisions* sits this track; a melodramatic love ballad that demonstrates Wonder's masterly songwriting talent, honed during his formative years at Motown. Musically, it has a stark simplicity, enhancing the narrative about the break-up of a relationship.

"Two people vow to stay in love as one they say/ But all is changed with time/ The future no one can see."

Malcolm Cecil, who kept impeccable records of the *Innervisions* sessions, logged the recording of *All In Love Is Fair* as starting at 2:30pm on 10 November 1972.

"On April 3, 1973, we added the electric piano, more vocals and some more drums," he told Chris Williams in *Wax Poetic* magazine. "We did the electric piano over again on the next day, because we didn't like how it sounded before. We made his four-vocal track into one final composite vocal track. We mixed it on April 8. I love the piano on that song."

The song was covered by Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand, and was a hit for Streisand when she released it as a single in 1974.

8 DON'T YOU WORRY 'BOUT A THING

Stevie Wonder *Lead vocal, background vocal, piano, drums, Moog bass*
Yusuf Roahman *Shaker*
Sheila Wilkerson *Bongos, Latin gourd*

A Latin soul feel permeates this exuberant and deeply funky track which, decades later, would become a huge influence on acid jazz and the likes of Jamiroquai. Piano and a smattering of bongos intro the track, which fizzes with utter joy and abandon. Essentially, this is a piano-led Latin hustle, on which Wonder recounts the story of a woman who is down on her luck.

On it, he showcases his vocal dynamics, creating an inventive skit that repeats the phrase "Todo está bien chévere", which translates as 'everything is really cool'. It's another element of the track that would resonate decades later, when it was appropriated by a number of hip-hop artists.

Released as a single, *Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing* peaked at No. 16 in the *Billboard* charts. A rousing and spirited song that sounds fresh and timeless.

9 HE'S MISSTRA KNOW-IT-ALL

Stevie Wonder *Lead and backing vocal, piano, drums, handclaps, TONTO synthesiser, congas*
Willie Weeks *Electric bass*

The album closes with this iconic, mellow ballad with its memorable topline melody and impeccable vocal performance from Wonder. His voice has rarely sounded sweeter. Lyrically, the song is alleged to be a scathing attack on the then US president, Richard Nixon, who at the time of the release of *Innervisions* was becoming mired in the Watergate scandal.

In addition to the lead vocal, Wonder provided background vocals, piano, drums, handclaps and congas, while the otherworldly flute-like sounds are provided by the TONTO modular synth. Willie Weeks, on electric bass, is the only other musician to feature.

one note at a time. He asked me: 'What is wrong with this keyboard?'. I told him: 'That's how it works. It only plays one note at a time.'"

Mastering the instrument was a challenge for Wonder. "It was definitely a lot of knobs to turn and push, and levers to twist and pull up and down. But my concern was not as great as my eagerness to learn it," he recalled. "And then he got it," said Cecil. "He asked me if we could record. We ended up recording the entire weekend. We got 17 songs done that first weekend. And that's how it all started."

MUSICAL VISION

Over the next three years, Cecil and Margouleff helped Wonder to realise his musical vision, often working on what they referred to as 'Stevie time' – 7pm to sunrise. Wonder recorded prodigiously from 1971 to 1973, often working 48 hours solid. "We worked hard there, and then we started making little journeys to the West," said Cecil.

'West' was the Record Plant studio in Los Angeles, where recording for *Innervisions* began in early 1972. Mediasound studios in New York was also used for some of the tracks. Wonder wrote, produced and arranged *Innervisions*, but he also played all, or virtually all, instruments on six of the nine tracks, overdubbing to create what was essentially a one-man band. Fat, analogue synth sounds fuelled hard-driving funk on tracks such as *Living For The City*, with lyrics expressing the plight of a young black man in 70s urban America.

Politics underpinned the album. The poignant *Visions*, the groove-laden funk of *Higher Ground* and the searing *Jesus Children Of America* all documented the social crisis at the core of the American dream.

> ***"At the centre of Stevie Wonder's music is the sound of what is real... he sings all the things he hears"***
> THE NEW YORK TIMES

"*Innervisions* gives my own perspective of what's happening in my world, to my people, to all people," said Wonder. But he also displayed the songwriting craft honed in his years at Motown, on *Golden Lady* and *All In Love Is Fair* – examples of beautiful, timeless balladry.

In July 1973, in the run-up to the release date of *Innervisions*, Stevie Wonder took a group of journalists on a blindfolded bus ride across New York City in a bid to help them experience urban life the way he did. This was followed by a playback of the album for the journalists, who were once again blindfolded. Most critics were fulsome in their praise. "At the centre of his music is the sound of what is real," concluded *The New York Times*. "Vocally, he remains inventive and unafraid, he sings all the things he hears: rock, folk, and all forms of black music."

Four-and-a-half decades on from its release, *Innervisions* remains a strident, visionary masterpiece, the pinnacle of Stevie Wonder's career. The whole album still sounds completely natural, with the driving funk grooves and the social injustices addressed in the lyrics resonating just as strongly today. "*Innervisions* routinely sits near the very top of critics' polls and that's because everything is in appropriate measure," wrote Daryl Easlea in a BBC review on the 40th anniversary of the album's release in 2011. "The ballads are not saccharine, the jazzy interludes minimised; the song and the message is everything. Nothing in his canon quite hits the spot like *Innervisions*. It is the best long-form capturing of Stevie Wonder's talent, and remains a work of constant, evolving surprise." ●

Electric Lady Studios

The studio where Stevie Wonder first began writing and recording with the TONTO synth was Electric Lady, in New York's Greenwich Village. The brainchild of Jimi Hendrix, it was built by architect and acoustician, John Storyk. Electric Lady opened for business on 26 August 1970 and was the first 'artist driven' studio in the world, a supposed 'free' environment in which artists could come and go as they pleased.

Its décor owed much to the aesthetic of architects such as Antoni Gaudí, utilising a combination of curves and coloured lights to create a pleasing ambience. By contrast, most other studios at the time offered stark fluorescent lighting and lab-coat-clad engineers.

When you consider the whole album's musical and lyrical maturity, it's hard to believe Stevie Wonder was just 23 at the time of *Innervisions*

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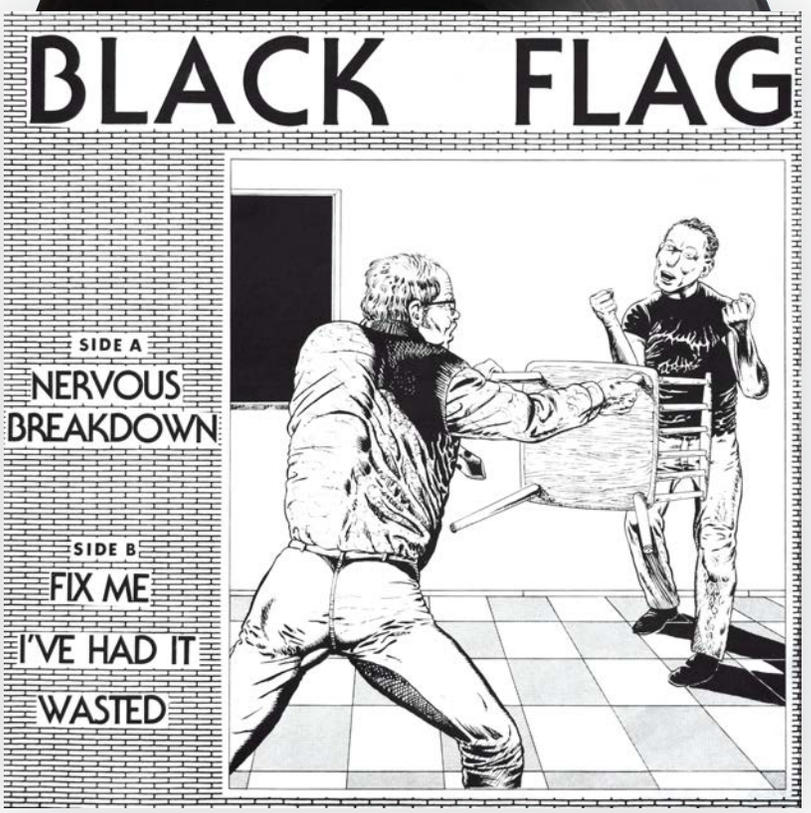


BLACK FLAG
NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

7" DEBUT EP

This debut release from the pioneers of hardcore punk is practically the blueprint for the band's entire career – and a rare, valuable find

WAX FACTS
Black Flag
Nervous Breakdown
SST Records
Year **1979**
Format **7"**

£800+

When it comes to hardcore punk, few bands have a legacy quite like Black Flag. Bursting out of the California scene in the late 70s, the band channelled the angst and bitterness of American youth culture to become one of the most important acts in the history of punk; iconic and unmatched.

Their debut 7", *Nervous Breakdown*, was the first release on Greg Ginn's newly founded label, SST Records, and featured the only appearance by ferocious vocalist Keith Morris. The artwork was put together by Raymond Pettibon, who would go on to be a long-time collaborator with Black Flag and SST, and the first pressing captures them in the days before their trademark 'bars' logo.

The four tracks on the EP essentially set the tone for Black Flag's career. The title track and *Fix Me* are frenetic slabs of hardcore, with Morris' self loathing and negativity at the forefront of the narrative. *Nervous Breakdown* led to the band being known as 'The Godfathers of Hardcore'.

Only 2,000 initial copies of *Nervous Breakdown* were pressed, and sold out in just over a year. It has been reissued numerous times, with notable updates to the artwork, but finding an original in decent condition is nigh-on impossible. On average, it will set you back nearly £800 for a mint copy, but when original bassist Chuck Dukowski managed to sell his own sealed copy for more than £3,000, you can be sure it's only going to increase in both historical and monetary value. ***Glen Bushell***

NONE MORE BLACK HUGH GILMOUR

UK artist Hugh Gilmour has designed arresting album covers for rock's biggest names. **Jonathan Webster** ventures into his studio to find out more…

Hugh Gilmour greets us in his characterful West London studio dressed in the kind of rock garb you'd expect from an artist who's spent 25 years creating record covers for everyone from Bowie to Black Sabbath. Aptly enough for a magazine about vinyl, he tells us how rock magazines and record shops were an inspiring and fertile breeding ground that helped his creative path coalesce. Of his early teens, Gilmour recalls: "All I wanted to do was to read *Sounds* or *Kerrang!*. Those rock magazines gave me a wide-ranging background, knowledge and above all, education, that'd prove very useful in my future career. I learned about the MC5 and The Stooges via *Kerrang!*, not just Motörhead, Saxon and Rush." His summer holidays were spent at his grandmother's in London, where he'd hang out for hours at a time sifting through the basement of the Camden Record And Tape Exchange: "It was a bit like fishing, and all made worthwhile when I found the LP that had the inner bag or the gatefold sleeve that I was after."

Gilmour's family were Londoners but, moving to Surrey aged five, he felt at his most content drawing and painting while at primary school. Young Hugh's penchant for sketching illustrations of monsters and axe-wielding voluptuous women prompted his amused father asking if he had nightmares. "I'm thankful that my parents encouraged my artistic inclinations," he says. "Particularly my mother, who's an artist in her own right."

The songs of Queen became a conduit into the heavier side of the music spectrum when he coughed up his pocket money to buy one of their singles. From Queen, it was a short step to Motörhead, when the 12-year-old Gilmour bought their No. 1 record *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith*. Soon after, he discovered Iron Maiden in a big way, and the rest, as they say, is history. According to Gilmour: "Maiden was the first band where I had to own everything that they released, in every format I could find."

With such a misspent youth, Gilmour was never going to go for a conventional career. His education began at Farnham art college, followed by Falmouth for technical illustration and finally, Kingston, for illustration and design, where he was taught to use a new-fangled machine called an Apple Macintosh. "During my art school/college years, I was becoming increasingly obsessed with music and buying records. And the cover art was often a big influence when deciding on a new purchase. I got Roger Dean's great *Views* book that showed a way into creating artwork for music. It got me thinking that 'I can make a career of this.'"

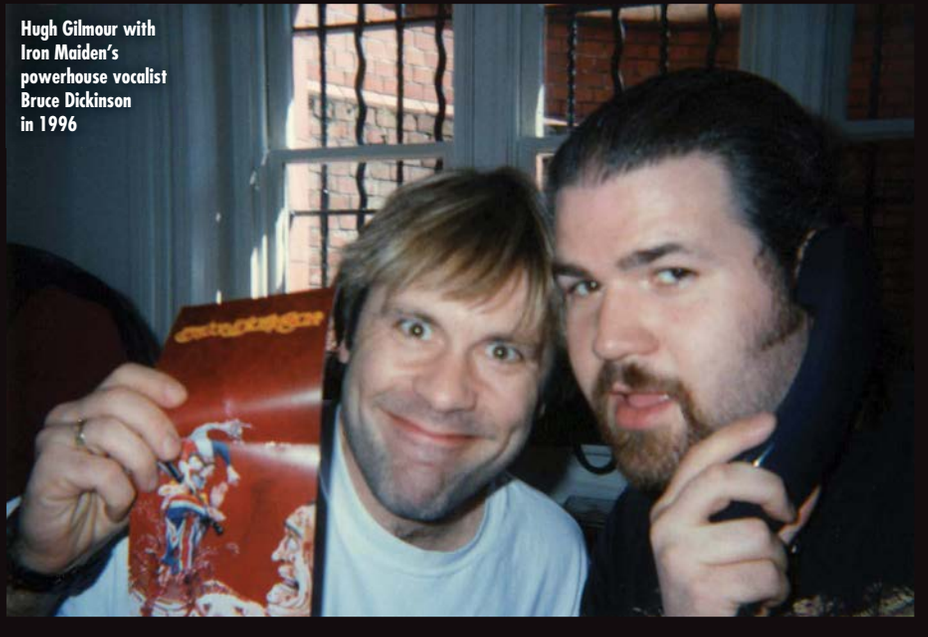
Another major influence was Derek Riggs, who painted the original Iron Maiden records and was someone Gilmour would eventually work with. "I was also a big fan of the fantasy art of Frank Frazetta and Boris Vallejo; and I loved those old Vertigo record sleeves by [Marcus] Keef."

Fine art and book covers played their part, too. He says: "Stephen King, H.P. Lovecraft and James Herbert horror novels had very intriguing jackets that appealed to me. But it wasn't all horror and fantasy, I was also, at various times, into Salvador Dali and the pre-Raphaelite artist Sir John Everett Millais."

MEET YOUR HEROES

Gilmour got his first big professional job with the budget reissue label Castle Music, when he joined them as an in-house designer and art director. At the time, Castle had a broad catalogue. "But it was an excellent grounding for the industry, where I'd be asked to work on a book about Aerosmith one day, or a Kinks compilation the next. Castle started to pick up a lot of rock and metal acts, including Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith, which led to working with Iron Maiden. Soon, I was working on albums by Motörhead, Deep Purple, UFO, Status Quo, Marillion, ELP, The Who, Fleetwood Mac, Thunder and so on. I loved and was very familiar with all of those bands, so I always strove to do the best possible job."

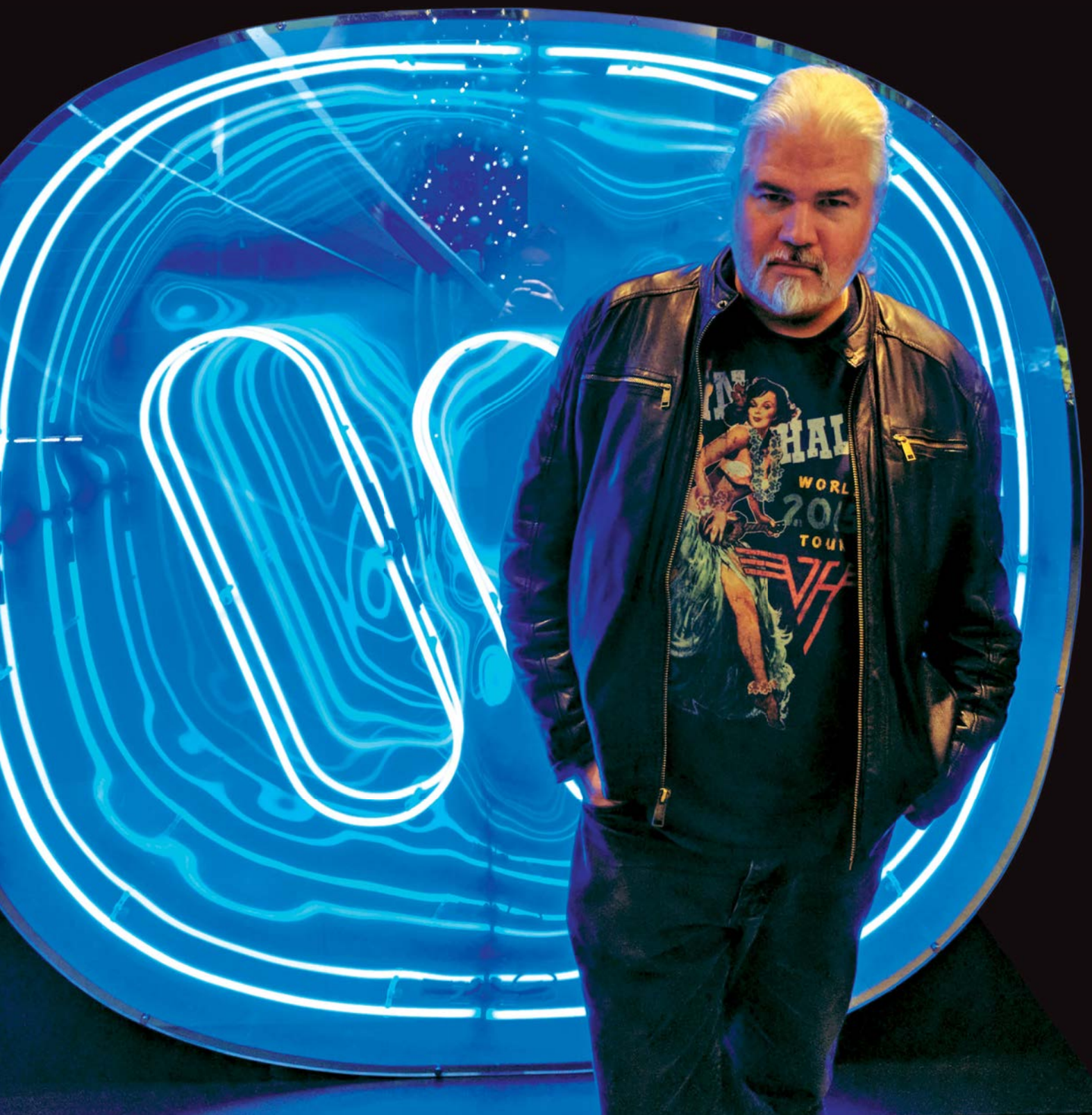
Gilmour has a typical strategy for approaching and working on a record ▶



Hugh Gilmour with Iron Maiden's powerhouse vocalist Bruce Dickinson in 1996

"ROCK MAGAZINES GAVE ME A WIDE-RANGING BACKGROUND, KNOWLEDGE AND ABOVE ALL, EDUCATION"

HUGH GILMOUR



cover. "Put simply", he says, "it starts with a title, theme or concept. However, if I'm unfamiliar with the music, then I look for what common or familiar ground exists."

Regarding artist input, Gilmour says: "Each artist is different. David Coverdale of Whitesnake is very hands-on, often with a clear concept in mind, and then we both develop the idea from there. I've subsequently designed many Whitesnake albums, from reissues and boxsets to new albums, plus tour merchandise such as programmes and T-shirts, and even David's stage shirts. Iron Maiden are equally involved along every step of the way with the design process. So the artwork has always been very important to those two acts, but sometimes a band is just happy for you to get on with it.

"The first LP I did for Thunder was called *The Thrill Of It All*, in 1996. I was asked to go to a meeting with the whole band, having been only given the title, so I took along 12 printouts of my ideas, which they arranged on the floor. Then they all paced around them in circles, stroking their chins, scrutinising these pictures on the floor. Danny, Thunder's singer, stopped and pointed at three of my designs, and said: 'Album cover! First single! Second single!', with the rest of the band nodding in agreement, and that was it. That first Thunder album led to a very fruitful working relationship with the band that's lasted over 20 years, including their last two studio albums, as well as numerous compilations, solo records and side projects."

When it comes to his tools of the trade, Gilmour combines a variety of old- and new-school approaches. "I grew up with paint and pencils, and then watercolour and gouache, then acrylic, oils, and airbrushing. You could get amazing results with an airbrush, but something like a simple gradient that takes a second in Photoshop can take hours using an airbrush, and would give your whole kitchen a light-blue patina! I now work mainly with Photoshop using a Mac and a scanner, but am always photographing anything I see that could be useful, and will get out my pencils and rOtring pens, if required."

Gilmour has built a close rapport with his clients. "I must be doing something right, because over the years, I've built very good relationships with Whitesnake, Sabbath, ELP, Uriah Heep, Maiden and particularly Bruce [Dickinson]. In fact, I've produced a vinyl boxset for Bruce's solo LPs, and a third vinyl boxset for Maiden. I wasn't sure which colour to use for the latest Maiden box, so I did them in West Ham's colours, knowing that was Steve Harris's team. No one objected."

THE PLANETS ALIGN

The advantage of having such a symbiotic relationship is that often, Gilmour will be on the same creative wavelength as his clients. He vividly remembers seeing a William Blake illustration called *The Ghost Of A Flea* in The Tate around 20 years ago. "I thought it would make a great album cover, so I bought a postcard of it from the shop before I left. A year or two later, I was working on an album for Bruce Dickinson called *The Chemical Wedding*. He phoned me from Los Angeles, where it was being recorded, and when he mentioned Blake, I was about to blurt out '*The Ghost Of A Flea*', but he said it before I could. The rest of the album had a Blake theme, and I'm pleased it's come out on vinyl, 19 years after it was first released."

Hugh wth Whitesnake's David Coverdale in 2008

Each project needs a different working method. Sometimes Gilmour is called upon to execute a job in breakneck fashion; other times, he has to be more measured. "I did a live album for Jeff Beck recently, which was approved from start to finish in 48 hours flat. That's pretty damn quick for a major artist. Conversely, I received a commission to design an album for Tony Iommi called *Fused,* for which I produced quite a few different visuals until it was decided which one was right. Tony is one of my biggest heroes, so there was no way I wasn't going to get there eventually."

Gilmour has had quite a few vinyl career highlights along the way, such as a gold disc for Phil Collins, but it's the heavy-metal designs that have given him the most satisfaction. "There's an Iron Maiden compilation, *17 Numbers By The Beast* which was a promo for America I'm particularly pleased with, and that ended up appearing on their T-shirts. Whitesnake's *Box 'O' Snakes* is another one I love; the cover was based on a photo I took with my phone of a flightcase sitting outside the production entrance of the Hammersmith Apollo a few years back. I'd turned up for a meeting with the band, and spotted the case, thinking it could be useful."

Gilmour is clearly delighted with his career trajectory. "I feel like that kid in the film *Almost Famous*. I was 13 when I saw my first gig – Iron Maiden at Hammersmith – and 22 years later, my band, Pig Irön, supported them there. Beat that! Pig Irön have since played with Budgie, Status Quo, Ten Years After, Uriah Heep, Saxon and UFO. Then, on separate occasions, I've flown to Holland and Sweden for the day with Bruce Dickinson piloting the aircraft. For a bloke who, as a little kid, used to copy Iron Maiden's logo onto their pencil case, I ain't complaining!

"Furthermore, I'm really happy to say that I'm designing more vinyl than ever. The quality control for vinyl is so much higher now, and, given the choice, I prefer to listen to vinyl over any other musical medium." ●

"I'M DESIGNING MORE VINYL THAN EVER. QUALITY CONTROL IS MUCH HIGHER"

HUGH GILMOUR

Hugh plays bass for Pig Irön, who have played with a host of metal greats

HUGH GILMOUR

THUNDER
THE THRILL OF IT ALL
LP, 1996

"At the time, Thunder had a bit of a heavy-metal image, when, in truth, they were a classic, blues-based hard-rock band, with pop hooks. Their first album had sold a lot of copies, and featured a girl in stockings and suspenders on the cover, so the label wanted something that wouldn't alienate or scare away someone who didn't like heavy metal, something a Blur fan might approve of. The band liked the fact that on *The Thrill Of It All* they had a pretty girl in a swimming costume on the cover, and were still politically correct. Genius!"

BRUCE DICKINSON
THE CHEMICAL WEDDING
2LP, 1998

"I was actually working with Iron Maiden for their *Virtual XI* album at the same time as this, which was Bruce's fifth studio solo album and the third I'd designed for him. It's based on a picture by William Blake, which I think lends itself very well to a hard-rock album of this nature. The first album I designed for Bruce was a record called *Alive In Studio A* early in 1995, and I recently put together a boxset of all of Bruce's solo studio albums, some of which are on vinyl for the first time, including this."

DEEP PURPLE
CONCERTO FOR GROUP AND ORCHESTRA
3LP SET, 2002

"The original version of this album was recorded in 1969 and released the following year. I felt the cover needed some updating for the 21st century, so I designed this version for EMI/Harvest in 2002… It eventually came out as a triple LP in 2014, with the packaging made to mimic an old-fashioned classical boxset."

WHITESNAKE
GOOD TO BE BAD
LP, 2008

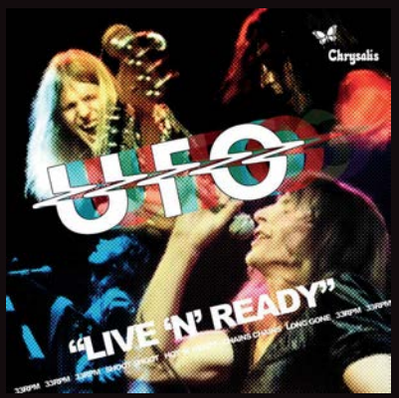
"*Good To Be Bad* was a Top 10 album on release in 2008, and Whitesnake's first studio album since 1997. The basic design came together quite quickly, then was finessed over a period of months, via many transatlantic phone calls with David Coverdale. The X that crosses the cover represents the fact that this is the 10th Whitesnake album."

DAVID BOWIE
SORROW
7" PICTURE DISC, 2013

"Have you ever seen a photo of Bowie where he doesn't look great? He must be one of the most photogenic people ever. This song appeared on *Pin Ups*, and this photo is an outtake from that album's photo session. The type is based on original editions of the *Sorrow* single. This was released by Parlophone as part of a series of Bowie picture discs."

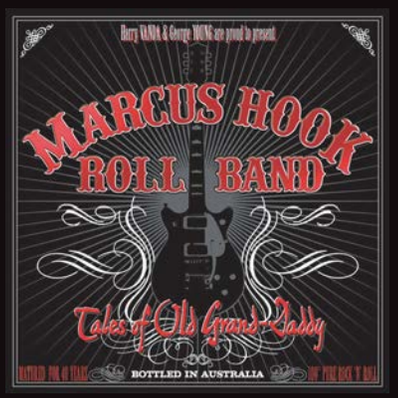
CLASSIC COVERS

HUGH GILMOUR



UFO
"LIVE 'N' READY"
7" EP 2013

"I know the title is a little clichéd, but deliberately so. I've been a fan of UFO for as long as I've been a fan of rock music, and will happily champion their cause at every opportunity. A lot of 70s and 80s rock bands claim to be the true inspiration for Spinal Tap, but I think UFO come closest; at their peak, they had every right to move up to become a stadium band."



MARCUS HOOK ROLL BAND
TALES OF OLD GRAND-DADDY
LP 2014

"This is a major curio… It has the very first recordings from around 1973 to feature a very young Malcolm Young and an even younger Angus Young. Old Grand-Dad is a brand of whiskey, so I wanted the cover to have a whiskey-label vibe without being a repro of the original label."

JEFF BECK
LIVE+
2LP 2015

"I was asked to design the cover for this live album shortly after designing the Japan-only *Yosogai* EP. For *Live+*, I took a very similar approach, and this cover was given the thumbs up within two days of being given the commission. The plus sign was included after Jeff added two studio recordings to this release. I worked on Jeff's latest studio album, *Loud Hailer*."

BAD COMPANY
ROCK 'N' ROLL FANTASY: THE VERY BEST OF
2LP 2015

"I'm fortunate to work with bands and artists I truly respect, and am a fan of, which most certainly is the case with Bad Company. I came up with the title, which I thought fitted perfectly. I got in touch with Aubrey Powell from Hipgnosis; this was an unused collage he'd produced some 40 years earlier to advertise a tour. It worked well in capturing this classic band, then at the height of their fame… I thought the light and airy vibe of this image suited a white frame better."

WHITESNAKE
THE PURPLE TOUR LIVE
2LP 2017

"Though I think every era of Deep Purple has something to offer, the three records recorded with David Coverdale are some of my favourites. Whitesnake have a very iconic logo that has taken on talismanic qualities and a lot of the themes and vibe for this, Whitesnake's very latest release, I'd already put together for *The Purple Album* studio record in 2015. Not only is the current line-up of Whitesnake a group of stellar musicians, but they look dynamic on stage, too, so here I tried to capture the electricity of a live rock band in full flight." ●

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The result of over 30 years of development, the Roksan Xerxes 20 Plus turntable features compact clean lines and robust construction of the three-plinth, triple-layer isolation system that'll look great in any room. The Xerxes 20 Plus offers a powerful and expansive sound displaying a fine mid-band, a deep bass and a very smooth treble. Available in Black, White and Rosewood finishes.

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THE SMITH
'ASK'
THE SMITHS
KISS
ALIVE
The Smiths
THE SMITHS
What Difference
AC/DC

VINYL VILLAINS
RECORDS WANTED
CASH PAID

CRIMINAL RECORDS

VINYL VILLAINS, EDINBURGH

34 years of swapping cash for records has taught Andy Watters a thing or two about vinyl. **Mark Alexander** finds out how one of Edinburgh's cornerstone record shops gained its notoriety

The story of Vinyl Villains starts, as many do, with an idea. Not a particularly well-rounded one or one with a definitive objective, but one with a clear spark and undeniable logic. And like all good ideas etched out of reason, it worked. "We opened on 1 December, 1983," says Andy Watters, owner of the Edinburgh shop. "Everything fell into place. It was amazing. We were lucky. We were busy almost immediately, not only in terms of people buying, but also with people selling. We had an amazingly quick turnover."

Located in earshot of the Edinburgh Playhouse and named after a Police bootleg from 1979, Vinyl Villains is positioned on the edge of the city centre, but slightly detached from the mania of Scotland's capital. It is, however, close enough to take advantage of passing trade, and the glass-fronted facade teases shoppers with glimpses of rare bootlegs and limited-run compilations. Inside, a familiar layout focuses on a central island flanked by shop-length shelves stacked with various musical formats. The walls are decorated with rare sleeves and the racks are crammed with tasty cuts. Rarely will you leave Vinyl Villains without something new.

Its reputation as a stalwart of Scotland's record scene was confirmed in The Proclaimers' musical *Sunshine On Leith*, the film version of which premièred in 2013. The reference to the east-end store ensured that, from humble beginnings, the shop has become an icon. Indeed, those who live in Edinburgh will gladly reminisce about their first purchase from the shop and exchanges with the staff.

For Watters, it just made sense. "I had a business partner, John Edwards," he says. "He had worked in record shops and had amassed a fairly big record collection. I'd been at college in London and returned to Edinburgh. I had about £1,000 in the bank. So he put in his records and I put in my cash. Things were a lot cheaper in those days – £1,000 went a long way!"

Watters had returned from London after delving into the world of Cultural Studies. He was young, eager and flowing with optimism. "I was looking for something to do and had always been a big music fan since I was a kid. So when John suggested opening a record shop, it seemed like a good partnership. When you're young and enthusiastic, you just look at the positives. You can't see how it could fail."

JAILHOUSE ROCK

Within a year, the shop was taking in more money than it ever would again. It was an outstanding start and, as Watters points out, it happened when "money was worth two or three times more than it is now". While the idea to open a shop was laudable, the duo's timing was impeccable. "We stepped in just at the right time," explains Watters. "Record collecting had just started to get really popular. Bands like Iron Maiden were bringing out a record on five different formats – picture discs, coloured vinyl… It was mostly heavy-metal bands that did that, so we had loads of it hanging up around the shop. People thought we were a heavy-metal shop because that's what you saw first when you came in. But we weren't. That was just an image we accidentally got."

Vinyl Villains was in fact an outlet for collectable records of any denomination, genre or creed. More than that, it remains a shop where you can pick up a bargain. "We try to make it affordable," says Watters. "Some of the prices on eBay these days are crazy.

> "EVERYTHING FELL INTO PLACE. IT WAS AMAZING. WE WERE LUCKY. WE WERE BUSY ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF PEOPLE BUYING, BUT ALSO WITH PEOPLE SELLING. WE HAD AN AMAZINGLY QUICK TURNOVER…"
>
> **ANDY WATTERS**

Pictures Mark Alexander

BLACK GOLD

Picking out a winner from the vast array of records on sale at Vinyl Villains can be tricky, especially if you're looking to make a profit on your purchase. Worry not, Watters has some choice tips and sage advice. "A few people buy from here and then put the records on eBay, because they know they're going to make a profit. Records cost a fortune in places like Russia, for instance. I had a Nazareth collection that was snapped up by Russians because they can sell them for £50 over there, whereas I'd sell them for £10 at most. You could open a shop in Russia, but you would never get any vinyl in – you would have to buy it here and ship it over.

"The most valuable records aren't from the 60s or 70s. It's the ones that came out when vinyl was more or less obsolete in the early 90s, when they would bring out 100,000 copies of an album on CD and maybe 1,000 on record. That kind of run makes those records very rare. Records from that era are worth hundreds, whereas most original LPs from the golden period of vinyl are really common. People say they've got a rare Beatles record… No they don't. Every single album they made sold in their millions."

Unfortunately, the people who sell us records see those prices as well, so they want far too much for their stuff, which can be a bit awkward." To keep ticket prices low, Watters explains he has to keep his overheads manageable, which includes limiting his staff to two part-time workers. It's a far cry from the heyday of Vinyl Villains during the late 1980s, when the shop employed four full-time staff and sold old and new records, especially indie titles.

The shop's remarkable opening run came unstuck at the turn of the millennium. "By then, people had started downloading music and they were saying vinyl was obsolete," Watters recalls. "Takings had dropped considerably and I had split with my business partner."

The formidable partnership between Watters and Edwards culminated in the opening of a second Edinburgh music shop, The Hog's Head, in 1993. The pair agreed to part company in the run-up to the new millennium, with the partners taking a shop each. For Watters, more hard times were to follow. "Our worst year was 2006. It got so bad that I paid £200 using my own credit card and put it through as a sale, to avoid getting penalised for going over my credit limit. That was the worst point, but then I turned it around and managed to get it back on track again. I had become a bit complacent and was drinking too much. I quit drinking and got my head together. I started afresh trying to rediscover my enthusiasm, which is a lot easier when you're not waking up with a hangover. We'll never get back to being as busy as we were, but I don't mind. I'm not going to be rich, but I'm earning a fairly decent living."

PEAK EASY

Vinyl Villains enjoys a peak in business during the summer months, when Edinburgh plays host to a series of cultural festivals that attract over four million visitors. For the rest of the year, away from the bellowing of the Royal Mile, the shop can be quiet in the morning and pick up over lunch. It has its regulars and, like most record

> "2006 WAS OUR WORST YEAR… BUT I TURNED IT AROUND AND MANAGED TO GET IT BACK ON TRACK. WE'LL NEVER GET BACK TO BEING AS BUSY AS WE WERE, BUT I DON'T MIND. I'M NOT GOING TO BE RICH, BUT I'M EARNING A FAIRLY DECENT LIVING"
>
> **ANDY WATTERS**

shops, has benefited from a surge of interest in vinyl. Entering the shop, you'll usually find Watters hunched over the desk, sorting through piles of recently dropped-off records. On this occasion, he is helping a middle-aged woman who evidently has never set foot in a record shop before. She's looking for a selection of titles for her husband and hasn't got a clue how to sift through the deep wells of tightly packed record sleeves. Watters steps in to help.

Vinyl Villains has experienced highs and lows. It rode the ferocious wave of the 80s and crashed on the bloodied rocks that were the 2000s. Today, there is a sense of calm about the shop. And if the current vinyl comeback should falter, Watters still sees possibilities, perhaps as his younger self did when he started out. "It's a trend at the moment, but it might not continue," he says. "For me, it wouldn't be a problem if the vinyl comeback suddenly ended, because my sales of vinyl haven't gone up that much and it has become harder to buy vinyl because people are either keeping their records or selling them on eBay. If it ended, perhaps all those people who have been buying records could start selling them again!" ●

FAVOURITE CUTS

LED ZEPPELIN III

Watters likes a bit of everything. He says it's the only way to be if you work in a record shop. But when push comes to shove and he's asked to select his favourite album, he's surprisingly clear about his selection.

"*Led Zeppelin III*," he says, without a moment's hesitation. "My brother got it when it came out in 1970. I loved music up until then, but when I heard that, I didn't know it was possible that music could sound so good. It had everything on it. It sounded better than anything I had ever heard before.

"I had heard *Led Zeppelin II* and thought it was fantastic, but *Led Zeppelin III* was a step up from that. My friend was a big fan of Led Zeppelin, and of the Jackson 5. So he would sing *The Lemon Song* one minute and then follow it with *ABC*. His parents were never in, so we went back to his house and listened to Led Zeppelin and Michael Jackson. When you're at that age of 11, 12 or 13, everything just sounds better.

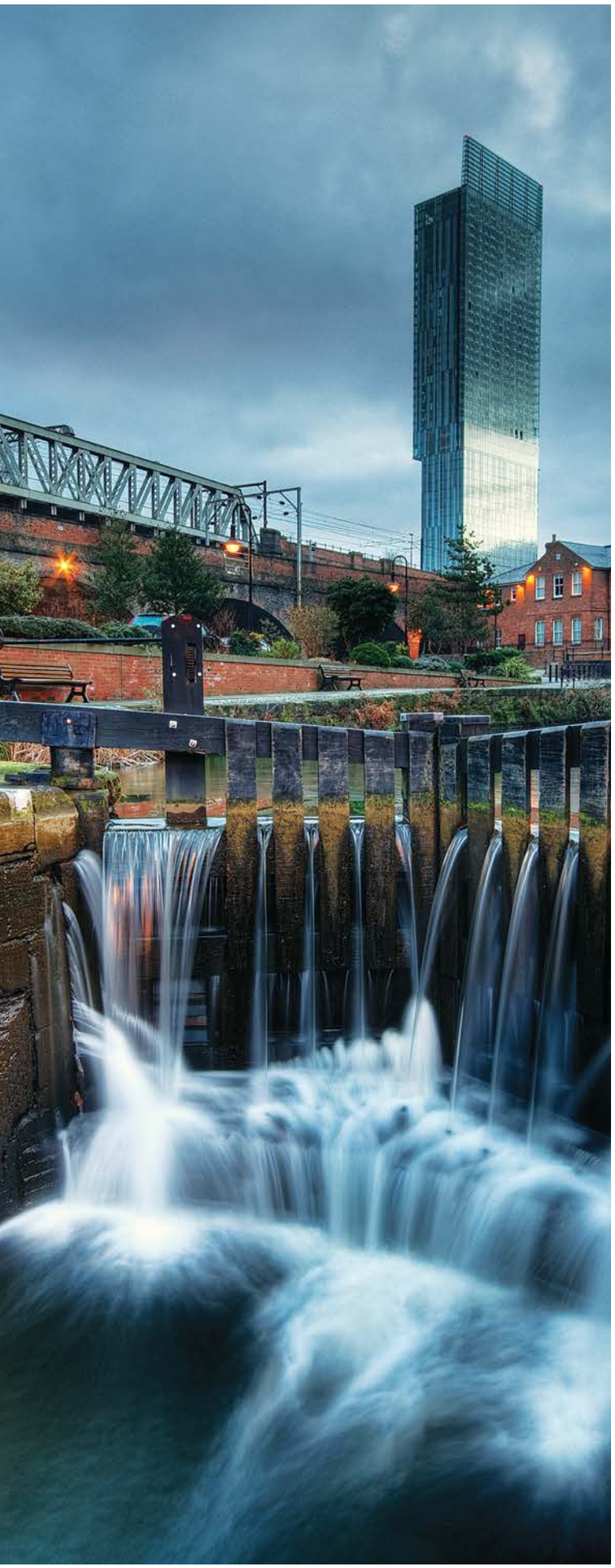
"I don't listen to music when I get home from work because I've been listening to it all day, but I do have a copy of *Led Zeppelin III*. It's one of those reissues that was released as a double album with remixes and unreleased tracks. Anyway, this one had been returned to the shop as it was faulty, because it contained two discs of the original album, so I kept it."

TOM WAITS
BLUE VALENTINE

After picking out his favourite album, Watters was keen to select a second. "I've been a big Tom Waits fan for 30 years… I do prefer the period when he did *Rain Dogs* and *Swordfishtrombones*, but *Blue Valentine* came out in 1978 and I got it in the 1980s. I went to see him a few years ago. His UK tour was two nights at the Edinburgh Playhouse, just up the road from the shop. He just plays venues that he likes, and he likes that one."

LED ZEPPELIN

Watters has seen some rarities pass through his shop; some will make your eyes water. "I had a copy of *Led Zeppelin* with turquoise writing on it. They changed the lettering after a couple of weeks, so the one with the turquoise lettering is really quite rare. The last time I had one of those was before the prices went crazy. I wanted £25 for it and I think they go for over £1,000 now. Nirvana's first single was a limited edition of about 100. It was before eBay when we had it in, so I probably sold it for £20. It goes for £1,500 now."



The Trip

Manchester

Appropriately enough, as our cover story celebrates Factory Records' 40th anniversary, **Mark Elliott** takes a closer look at the vinyl vendors of Manchester…

It's hard to write about this marvellous city without the clichés tumbling faster from the keyboard than a finishing-line-fixated whippet (yes, that's the first one and, no, I didn't actually come across one of those). I did, however, get wet. It truly does know how to chuck it down in Manchester (two) and my trip was conducted in a blur of hazy rain – of the kind that only somewhere nestling by the Pennines knows how to produce. The fact that it was still technically summer threatened to make the whole experience more than a little irritating, but the hustling from one shop to another was actually a timely masterclass in physical dexterity as I tried to keep bags of discs dry while they were getting soggier by the second.

But then there's the welcome. They can't mind the rain in Manchester, because it certainly doesn't dampen anyone's spirits. Everyone's got a sharp one-liner – usually delivered with a winning smile – and, even when I was acting like a lemon (asking for directions when my iPhone had given up the ghost – or got too wet – as I stood outside where I needed to get to), there was a cheery rejoinder. "It's behind you, mate, and – just in case – your brain should be between your ears. Happy shopping!" It was a heartening moment.

Manchester is proud of its musical sons and daughters, and their imprint is everywhere

And then there are the rock clichés. Not unreasonably, the city is immensely proud of its musical sons and daughters. From Herman's Hermits to Mick Hucknall, from The Smiths to Oasis, their imprint lies everywhere. HMV summed it up nicely with a neat display of Mancunian icons. In a year when the city's indomitable spirit has been tested in the most brutal of ways, it's a poignant reminder that this legacy is in many ways the glue that binds everyone together.

Not surprisingly, the city's many record shops are a big contributor to this heritage, with dedicated sections and some evidence that it draws in the casual visitor. Sifters Records (sifters-records-manchester.co.uk) is a little distance out of the city centre, and was immortalised in the Oasis track *Shakermaker*. Consequently, it's almost a tourist attraction in its own right.

Manchester is an absolute gem of a city and its record shops are excellent. I travelled up the night before to make an early start, as I knew I was bound to struggle attempting to give each shop the time it truly deserved. Inevitably, this proved to be the case, but I have to confess it's probably a good job – as the rain and the fact I needed to get everything home again on the train would likely have limited the practicality of buying much else…

Illustration Ben Talon

THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM

PICCADILLY RECORDS

VinylRevival

"SOUNDWAVES HERE WE COME"

EASTERN BLOC ★

vinylexchange

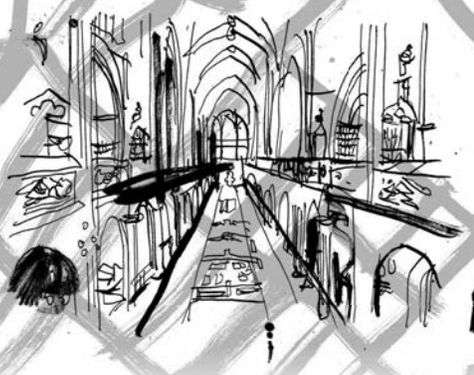
THE LOWRY

VINYL RESTING PLACE

OXFAM

CLAMPDOWN RECORDS

EMPIRE EXCHANGE



THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY

KINGBEE RECORDS

❶ EMPIRE EXCHANGE
1 Newton Street, M1 1HW
0161 236 4445
Opening hours
9am to 7.30pm Monday to Sunday

❷ PICCADILLY RECORDS
53 Oldham Street, M1 1JR
piccadillyrecords.com
Opening hours
10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday; 11am to 5pm Sunday

❸ VINYL EXCHANGE
18 Oldham Street, M1 1JN
vinylexchange.co.uk
Opening hours
10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday; noon to 5pm Sunday

❹ OXFAM
8-10 Oldham Street, M1 1JQ
oxfam.org.uk
Opening hours
10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday; noon to 5pm Sunday

❺ CLAMPDOWN RECORDS
9-11 Paton Street, M1 2BA
clampdownrecords.com
Opening hours
10.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 6pm Saturday; 11am to 4pm Sunday

❻ HMV
92 Arndale Centre, M4 2HU
hmv.com
Opening hours
9am to 8pm Monday to Friday; 9am to 7pm Saturday; 11.30am to 5.30pm Sunday

❼ EASTERN BLOC RECORDS
5a Stevenson Square, M1 1DN
easternblocrecords.com
Opening hours
7.30am to 6pm Monday to Wednesday; 7.30am to 9pm Thursday; 7.30am to 11pm Friday; 9am to 11pm Saturday; 9am to 4pm Sunday

❽ VINYL REVIVAL
5 Hilton Street, M4 1LP
vinylrevivalmcr.com
Opening hours
10am to 5pm Monday to Friday; 9.30am to 5pm Saturday

❾ SOUNDWAVES HERE WE COME
2nd Floor, Afflecks, M4 1PW
Opening hours
10.30am to 6pm Monday to Saturday; 11am to 5pm Sunday

❿ VINYL RESTING PLACE
3rd Floor, Afflecks, M4 1PW
Opening hours
10.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 6pm Saturday

⓫ KINGBEE RECORDS
519 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton, M21 0UF
kingbeerecords.co.uk
Opening hours
10am to 5.30pm Monday to Saturday

SOUTH WEST ▶

1 EMPIRE EXCHANGE

This is always my first port of call in Manchester. I love this subterranean Aladdin's Cave of books, magazines, memorabilia, toys and all manner of things you didn't realise you needed. There's a decent amount of vinyl here – racks of 7" singles that throw up the usual suspects and the occasional oddity. The Alan Parson Project's David Townsend also wrote the Cliff Richard standard *Miss You Nights* and chanced his arm with a solo project in 1978 on Mercury. Its sole single, *When I Kiss You*, failed to trouble the charts, but made its way into my collection for £3 (cheaper than its current Discogs pricing). Like most of these general vintage stores, there's a reasonable amount of effort required to navigate your way through it all, but there are always gems to be found here. Donny Osmond's *Disco Train*

Like most of these general vintage stores, it takes effort to navigate your way through it all, but there are always gems to be found here

collection from 1976 might not be everyone's cup of tea, but I unearth a great copy in the rock section. Gary Byrd – who had a big UK hit in 1983 with Stevie Wonder – released selections from his gospel Radio One radio show on BBC Records and it's typical of the random items I covet. There are some nice pop magazines to pore over and I find a nice *Picture Show And TV Mirror* edition from 1960 leading on Adam Faith. Ian Stott, who works at the store, estimates that vinyl makes up 20% of the stock and says it keeps the place ticking over. Empire Exchange started life in the 1980s and has been in various locations across the city, including Back Turner Street, before finding a great spot adjacent to Piccadilly Gardens. "We get a lot of rare Beatles and Hollies material," says Ian, "but that's far from all of it." He shows me a copy of Blackpool's The Rockin' Vickers' 1966 single *Dandy*, which featured a pre-Motörhead Ian Kilmister, later to be better known as Lemmy. Now I'm intrigued, but nervous of extending my collecting obsession into the vast (and pricey) realms of 60s beat groups, so pass on this. But then I spot a Bad Boys Inc picture disc. I know, I know…

2 PICCADILLY RECORDS

Now, if we're talking Manchester institutions, they don't come much bigger (in retail terms) than Piccadilly Records, which started life in 1978 and has been at the heart of the city's independent scene ever since. It's so respected that it has its own book – a fascinating celebration of the customers, staff and music that make up this classic store. Starting life the same year as Factory Records, it's steeped in that mindset and you won't find a Bad Boys Inc record here. What you will find, if you're lucky, is the odd celebrity shopper – Tim Burgess and Johnny Marr are regulars – and a staggering range of predominantly indie and dance. I pick up a fabulous 12" reissue of Gepy & Gepy's extraordinary 1979 Italo-disco classic *Body To Body* (with a nipple-tastic sleeve my mother wouldn't approve of) and the *Lion* soundtrack on 180-gram blue vinyl, featuring one of the ubiquitous Sia's best, *Never Give Up*. *The Piccadilly Records Book* is a pleasure to flick through and sums up the store's ethos perfectly. Here's a quote to sum it up: "The website is my browser homepage, the shop is my community centre and the staff I'd call friends." Couldn't put it better myself, Robert C Armin.

Piccadilly Records started life in 1978 – the same year as Factory Records – and it's steeped in that mindset

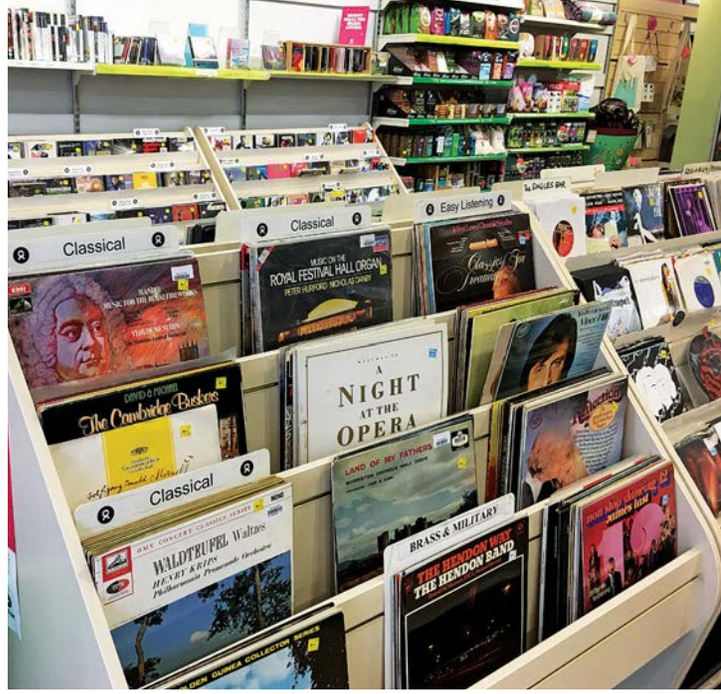
3 VINYL EXCHANGE

The 29-year-old Vinyl Exchange is a Northern Quarter powerhouse. Proud of its position as one of the North West's largest entertainment retailers – focused increasingly on its strong website – they're as keen to buy your records as they are to sell you some. I always find the store strangely reminiscent of London's Music & Video Exchange chain and there's no doubt the two brands share the same attention to detail. Pricing's fair, although the knowledgeable members of staff aren't likely to let a bargain slip out onto the shelves unawares. The records are all downstairs and the basement can always be guaranteed to throw up something interesting. The Manchester scene is strongly represented and I find a full set of Morrissey albums for a very reasonable sum. I always crave the unpredictable and the bargain section throws up Black's 1985 12" issue of *More Than The Sun*, The Kinks' follow-up to *Come Dancing – Don't Forget To Dance* and the 1986 Steve Arrington LP, *The Jammin' National Anthem*. I do try to mix things up – even the shop assistant looks bemused.

4 OXFAM

Almost next door to Vinyl Exchange and Piccadilly Records is a very reliable branch of Oxfam. I rarely write in detail about my charity-shop successes (and space prevents me going into too much detail here), but suffice to say, this branch in particular (not actually a dedicated Books & Music branch) is always interesting (who knew about a Liverpool post-punk pop band called Virgin Dance? The 1983 *No Disguise* single is great!) and the soul section is particularly strong on this visit. Do pop in, as it's among the best examples of its kind I've come across.

Close to Vinyl Exchange and Piccadilly Records is a very reliable branch of Oxfam, it's one of the best I've come across



5 CLAMPDOWN RECORDS

A regular stop on my habitual visits to this city – it's the closest record shop to Piccadilly train station – this great place never disappoints. For a pop collector like me, it creates reverent sections affording a-ha the same careful management as, say, Oasis (albeit sometimes with less depth of stock). Memorabilia is presented cannily alongside the records (leading to me picking up Whitney Houston's 1991 *I'm Your Baby Tonight* World Tour programme quite by chance). In the days before I could travel as much, I recall the excitement of finding a set of Japanese Madonna singles here, and that selection was hard to match – even on my trip to Tokyo many years later. Today's haul yields a great Manchester memento: a bootleg album of Erasure's gig at the Manchester Ritz on 15 April, 1987. It's a fascinating time capsule framed by the fresh faces of two of my musical heroes at the dawn of their extraordinary career. Neil Clarke (no relation to Vince) has owned the store for 10 years, but it's been here longer than that. Neil says the Manchester bands always sell, but even he can be surprised at what he is asked for. He references the creep of vinyl back into the mainstream with an example of a middle-aged man coming in recently to enquire about a second-hand Barry Manilow album for his wife. It's a cheering anecdote, as it proves it's not just me buying the odd Manilow record! Neil's most interesting item for sale is the super-rare *Panic* 12" single from The Smiths, complete with the stickers. It's a rarity indeed and, along with a sharp Beastie Boys picture disc, reinforces why this is perhaps my most reliable pick in a city where I'm truly spoilt for choice.

Top five

1 IF YOU LET ME STAY
There are many hotel rooms in Manchester, but there's always a lot going on, so availability can be tricky and prices fluctuate widely. Avoid the autumn – and political-conference season in particular – and keep an eye on what is being hosted in this busy northern business and culture hub to avoid the highest rates.

2 THIS IS MY SONG
There are so many decent venues in Manchester, it's likely there will be a band or singer worth seeing if you're staying over. The Manchester Arena is obviously the biggest and best known, but check out skiddle.com for a deeper selection. Home is a fabulous central space for all manner of great music and culture (homemcr.org).

3 UP WHERE WE BELONG
If you've a taste for heights and a desire to get a perspective of the city, the tallest building in the UK, outside London, is the Beetham Tower. The Cloud 23 Bar (cloud23bar.com) offers my favourite view of Manchester, day or night, but check, as it sometimes closes for a private event in the evening.

4 FAIR DOS
Premier Fairs runs a series of record fairs in the city across the year. Currently, a decent-size one is held at Sachas Hotel in Tib Street every other month.

5 DON'T RAIN ON MY PARADE
Statistically speaking, it usually rains on just 140 days a year in Manchester, but I almost guarantee that one of them will be when you visit. Take a waterproof!

6 HMV

Here's a rare shout-out for this too-easily-dismissed chain. Like many of you, I suspect, I rely on HMV for a regular fix of real-life retail therapy (so much more exciting than sitting at a screen to do it). The Manchester branch is situated in the Arndale Centre and is among the biggest still operating in the UK. I want to make special mention of the Manchester store for two reasons: 1) the vinyl section is great and as good as any I've found in other branches of HMV, and 2) they do me a huge service. I'm blaming the rain for making my brain soggy, but, after buying a few CDs (yes, I do buy them, too) and a couple of LPs in their sale, I manage to leave the shop with my debit card lodged carelessly in one of their card readers. It's almost an hour later that the unwelcome surge of panic overcomes me in Eastern Bloc and I have to race desperately back to retrieve it. Of course, the staff have found it and kept it safe. Now that's what I call service, and it strikes me that the branch deserve a salute for this simple gesture alone. But, in any case, HMV deserves all our thanks for sticking with the challenge of providing us 21st-century shoppers with a good selection of vinyl. Our under-pressure high streets would be even less appealing without them. "How did we do today?" asks their in-store questionnaire. Exceptionally, I'd say.

7 EASTERN BLOC

All this shopping is taking its toll on my stamina, so the logical place to take a break is the café/record shop that is Eastern Bloc, situated on the edges of the Northern Quarter. If drum 'n' bass, jungle, techno, house, electronica and even reggae light your fire, then this place is something of a must-visit. I'd be lying if I said much of that floats my boat, but I can confirm they serve an exceedingly fine coffee. The record racks and obligatory turntables are upstairs and, on my visit, the place is heaving. I strike lucky and find a corner seat. The café opens at 7.30am, which strikes far too early for much of the music I hear on my early afternoon pitstop, so I speculate whether they have mood music to orchestrate different stages of their lengthy opening hours. At that moment, I decide I fancy a flapjack. Out comes the wallet to break a note (coins had sufficed for the cappuccino) when I realise that disaster is looming large…

If drum 'n' bass, jungle, techno, house, electronica and reggae light your fire, this is a must-visit

8 VINYL REVIVAL

This 20-year-old store proudly wears its Manchester focus on its sleeve, and rightly so. It has a very strong section featuring the best of the city's stars. The vinyl jostles with CDs, some memorabilia and T-shirts, but there's a decent selection, with a handful of racks of bargain material, including a still-sealed copy of Euro balladeers Double's second international album and some of the monthly Disco Mix Club collections, which throw up some super-rare mixes from largely 1980s chart stars. These semi-official cuts rarely secured a mainstream release, and if you've ever wondered what the Andrews Sisters mashed up with M|A|R|R|S' *Pump Up The Volume* sounds like, head to Ben Liebrand and the May 1988 edition. The Cure megamix on November 1990's version is, in truth, a little less startling…

9 SOUNDWAVES HERE WE COME
10 VINYL RESTING PLACE

Back in the day, you just didn't venture into Afflecks unless your hair was 15 metres high and you slapped half of the Boots make-up counter on before facing the world. Now the former goths' kingdom is home to as many Japanese tourists and middle-agers like me as anything more colourful. The former department store was reborn as an independent market in 1981 and used to be known as Affleck's Palace. Now billed just as Afflecks and claiming to be an emporium of eclecticism, the 73 small businesses certainly live up to the ethos. You'll find vinyl on many of the stalls here, but the two dedicated record retailers obviously stand out. Soundwaves Here We Come has some great stuff; Scarlet Fantastic's *24hrs* LP (appropriate, I thought, to pick these pop goths, given the venue) is £10, but in excellent condition. Vinyl Resting Place is also very good, and you'll find Alistair's stall up on the third floor for now… He stocks a really good range of records (some new, but mainly second-hand) and he kickstarted the return of dedicated music stalls to the site, after a few years when the previous traders had shut up shop. The breaking news is that he will soon be moving to a new site in the building that's three times the size of his current unit, so I'll definitely be calling back.

11 KINGBEE RECORDS

With so much to visit in the city centre, the sprawling suburbs of Manchester can seem an unlikely draw, but there are true treasures to be found if you are prepared to venture further afield. Chorlton takes about 10 minutes and about £12 in a cab, and is really worth a look. Established in 1987, Kingbee Records has a justified reputation as a great Northern Soul and reggae source. I think the soundtracks are especially strong and the sometimes dusty piles of many genres will keep you occupied for hours. The Def Jam issue of the *Less Than Zero* soundtrack is something I've been after for ages and at £5, is a real bargain. It may not be his finest hour, but Paul McCartney's *Press To Play* for £3 in mint condition is a better price than I've ever seen in a record shop. Even Ellie Goulding's recent *Delirium* in excellent condition is just £8. It's interesting to see relatively new releases increasingly hitting the second-hand racks these days. But my find of the day is Miss Minogue's 1988 *The Kylie Collection*. This Australia-and-New-Zealand-only two-set compilation paired her first album with a bonus disc of PWL mixes and a poster – and even this is intact. At just £5, I am thrilled to bits, and it rounds off the day nicely before my train back home. But is there a break in the clouds as I wait for the cab back to the station? I should be so lucky… ●

Kingbee Records' soundtracks are strong and the dusty piles of many genres will keep you occupied for hours

The Trip

Getting there

Manchester is well served by train services, with Piccadilly being the largest station hub for trains heading in from the south. The airport is about 10 miles out, but trains will get you into town in around 10 minutes. The tfgm.com site offers good advice about travelling around the city, but the shops in the centre are situated close to each other and can be walked between within 10 to 15 minutes or so. If you are travelling further afield, look at getting a System One Travelcard, which you can use on most trains, trams and buses. Like most cities now, the cycle lanes dominate and while driving in the centre is probably easier than in London, it's still best avoided: parking certainly seemed no more plentiful.

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DIGGING FOR VICTORY

In 1994, **Mark O'Shaughnessy** went from the East side to the West side for 'mo diggity', bagging it up in the record stores of San Francisco

By the time we reached the summer of 1994, I had recently hit 30 years of age and was already the veteran of eight or 10 USA buying trips… not bad going for a man who hadn't left the country at all until he was 22. I'd concentrated primarily on the East in my USA road trips – namely NYC (several times), New Jersey, Chicago, Detroit and Philly – and had some great returns in those areas. But now it was time to try pastures new.

I'd heard great reports from a few fellow dealers and diggers who'd hit the West: LA, Las Vegas, California, etc, so plane tickets were booked and local-dealer colleagues, collectors, diggers and excavators that we knew in the city were contacted by phone. San Fran seemed to be a very, very good bet to me. With an incredibly rich musical heritage, loads of record labels had their base there and also, as we soon found out, literally 40 to 50 record stores alone in the 'city centre' itself; and that was not counting those in outer-lying areas and the ones we were to chance upon in Oakland, just across the bridge.

My partner in crime was once again my ex-partner in Resolution Records, Chris Fleming. We flew in one bright Saturday morning in August and straight away, the heat from the runway hit us square in the face – meltdown. We rented a car at the airport.

A lot of the vinyl action in SF was centred around the heaving nucleus of Haight Street, the cultural centre of the city since the hippie days of the late 60s. In many ways, it hasn't changed that much over the years. Every other store seemed to be a head shop or a vegetarian restaurant or other madcap marginal business: there was definitely a buzz.

And, at that time, records were still big business over there. CDs were incoming, for sure, but hadn't yet toppled the mighty vinyl giant and the stores there were literally bulging at the seams. The buck bins in some of the stores there would put the regular racks in other cities to shame, sealed copies of £20-25 soul/funk LPs laying there in multiples, for a buck a pop. We filled several boxes in the first two hours, in three stores alone.

SUMMER OF LUV

The now-legendary Luv N' Haight Records on Haight Street was well established by then – and I still occasionally allow my mind to wander back to some of the black gold I saw on the wall in that place back in the summer of 1994; every West Coast rarity you could think of was up there, all reasonably priced and mostly sealed. I particularly remember scooping up three sealeds of the Magnum *Fully Loaded* LP For $30 each – that incredible SF local-area album was literally red hot over here in the UK at that time and fetching £100-plus, even back then. I would've been able to make up my own price for those sealed copies. And yes! The West Coast jazz I saw in there was among the best I've ever seen, from that day to this. Mind-boggling stuff I'd only ever read about, right there in front of my face, at very buyable prices. We dived straight in.

"I still allow my mind to wander back to some of the black gold I saw on the wall in the summer of 1994: every single West Coast rarity was up there"

The then-famous London record store, Reckless Records, had recently opened up a branch in SF and boy, did we hit paydirt when we went in there on our fourth day in the city. As ever, the buck bins were overflowing and I can also recall finding two or three copies of Funkadelic's killer *Maggot Brain* album in there for $8-10 each, quickly scooped up and added to an ever-growing mountain of music, mainly by black artists, in our sleazy motel room in Nob Hill. We were literally tripping over £50-plus LPs as we walked around the room. Crazy times.

We went round most of the stores in the city and we were even given a bunch of free promo 12s in one store. The guy was so happy with our spend in-store, and just said: "Take 'em back to London, guys."

With just one day left of our visit, it was time to put the Sound Burger away and sample a few of the other delights of this wonderful city. Cocktails were consumed, Chinese food was scoffed and the head shops were also explored – man, we slept well in Nob Hill on that last night. I was to return several times to California in search of the black gold during the 90s and 2000s, so, until next time… ●

Mark O'Shaughnessy is the owner of Bath record shop Resolution Records and has been a professional record dealer since 1993

Anthology

This New York record label has been beachcombing for psychedelic soundtracks from surf movies, forgotten spiritual-jazz classics and obscure Scandi-prog since 2014. **Chris Parkin** delves deeper into the archives of Anthology…

Keith Abrahamson's Anthology does exactly what it says on the tin. Since 2014, the New York label has been anthologising forgotten junctures in the passage of underground pop culture by diving into major archives, such as those assembled by Johan Kugelberg – who runs Anthology's publishing arm – and Julio Santo Domingo Jr. the brother of the label's philanthropist co-founder, Andrés. The latter's enormous collection of drugs, sex, magic and rock 'n' roll ephemera is showcased in Anthology's new book, *Altered States*.

Inspired and informed by these collections, Anthology's in-depth approach to highlighting lost moments in music is played out in its reissues of surf-film soundtracks. Forget Jan And Dean or Dick Dale's 'tremolo-y guitar hero vibe', though. Abrahamson is obsessed with the sun-dappled prog and psychedelic folk that scores surf films made specifically between 1969 and the end of the 70s. These soundtracks were written and performed by surfers to capture the correct wave-riding vibe, but also to keep costs down.

For Abrahamson, who only recently overcame his fear of the ocean, it was all about the music rather than the gnarly surf action. "It was totally the records," he says. "*Morning Of The Earth* was a Holy Grail, and the one that got me hooked. From there, I got into *The Innermost Limits Of Pure Fun*, then *Crystal Voyager* and *A Sea For Yourself*. They had incredible soundtracks. Most of them are Australian; there's something in the water out there."

PRECIOUS CARGO

The label's *Surf Archive* includes, among other things, the soundtrack to *Morning Of The Earth* and Australian psych-rockers Tamam Shud's wiggy score to *Evolution*. More than anything, though, Abrahamson admits that he's "attracted to the freaks, man", and the label has found plenty of them on dry land, too. Highlights include FJ McMahon's 1969 off-kilter Americana outing *Spirit Of The Golden Juice* and three albums by late-60s Swedish 'progg' band Träd, Gräs Och Stenar. But in November, they set the bar higher with the reissue of Pharoah Sanders' incredible *Tauhid*, *Jewels Of Thought* and *Deaf Dumb Blind (Summun Bukmun Umyun)* albums. "We've tapped into the zeitgeist moment for spiritual jazz," laughs Abrahamson. "It's great, man."

> "*MORNING OF THE EARTH* WAS A HOLY GRAIL. FROM THERE, I GOT INTO *THE INNERMOST LIMITS OF PURE FUN*, THEN *CRYSTAL VOYAGER* AND *A SEA FOR YOURSELF*. THEY HAD INCREDIBLE SOUNDTRACKS. MOST ARE AUSTRALIAN; THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE WATER OUT THERE"

They've waited long enough. Abrahamson first launched Anthology in 2005 while he was working at Andrés Santo Domingo's Kemado Records. The idea was to license lost albums and then host them on the label's website. "But even in 2005, people were like, is it like Napster? Are you stealing my music?" says Abrahamson. He was limited to such short licences that, when he reactivated Anthology in 2014, having shelved it while setting up Mexican Summer in 2008, they had all expired. "We were so early on so many titles," sighs Abrahamson. "If I had just run it like a record label, I could've licensed so much cool shit!"

Never mind, though. With French avant-garde artist Catherine Ribeiro, Philadelphia electronic band Nightcrawlers and a compilation of library music on the reissue schedule this year, Anthology's varied catalogue of releases is rapidly turning into an essential resource for fans of underground culture. ●

Otis Redding

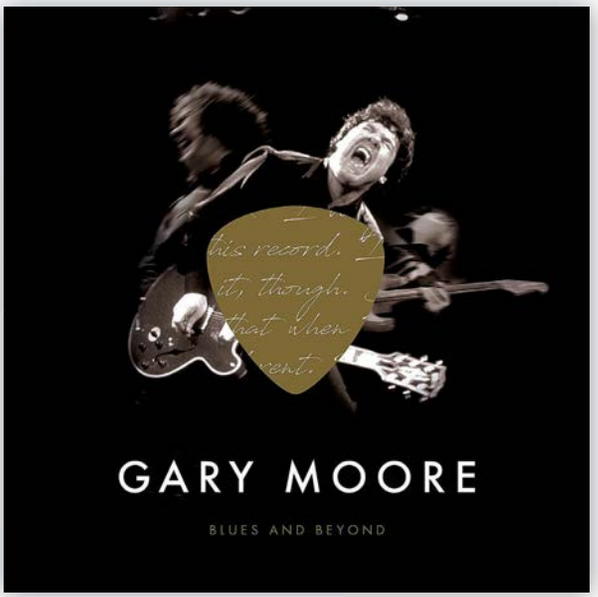
THE DEFINITIVE STUDIO ALBUM COLLECTION

RHINO

This seven-LP collection of original mono mixes arrives alongside a limited-edition gold 7" of *(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay*, 50 years after Redding's death. The sheer emotive power of the Georgia soul legend's voice was evident from 1964's *Pain In My Heart,* with the title track, *These Arms Of Mine* and a spine-tingling cover of his idol Sam Cooke's *You Send Me*. Witness the interplay with Booker T. & The MG's on 1965's *The Great Otis Redding Sings Soul Ballads*, before the majestic *Otis Blue* saw the circle completed – Redding reclaiming The Rolling Stones' *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction*, having essentially invented Mick Jagger. Other boxset highlights include 1966's *The Soul Album* and his rollicking version of *Day Tripper*. The set is completed by the mixed, posthumuous *The Dock Of The Bay*. Collectors may be disappointed by the lack of extras, but it's a comprehensive document of Redding's dizzying achievements in his 26 years. As the sleeve notes on the reverse of *Otis Blue* (Volt 412) put it: "Soul is not something that can be feigned – you either have it or you don't. Otis Redding has it, to a degree almost unrivalled by any other young singer." *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

9/10



Gary Moore

BLUES AND BEYOND

BMG

Gary Moore's metamorphosis from pulverising hard rocker to pulverising blues rocker on 1990's *Still Got The Blues* album effectively mined a new seam for the Northern Irishman's supercharged fretboard skills. This new four-disc double gatefold 'AxeWax' vinyl collection joins him a full decade on, compiling tracks from 1999's wrong turn *A Different Beat*, 2001's *Back To The Blues*, the 2002 *Scars* project with Cass Lewis of Skunk Anansie and Primal Scream's Darrin Mooney, and 2004's *Power Of The Blues*. High-octane highlights include *Scars*' raw and bleeding *Ball And Chain* and the Hendrixian *World Of Confusion*, the manic pentatonic flurries and effects experimentation of *Cold Black Night* and a feedback-laden nine-minute incineration of Moore's calling-card *Parisienne Walkways*, recorded at 2003's Monsters Of Rock festival. Thankfully, the tracklisting does also intersperse the histrionics with a showcase of his more melodic and restrained side. The CD-only boxset adds two further discs of live tracks, alternate versions, repro merchandise and Harry Shapiro's brand-new official Moore biography. *Bill Weaving*

VERDICT

7/10

Fleetwood Mac

FLEETWOOD MAC

RHINO

Thanks to the global monster that *Rumours* became, it's easy to overlook its predecessor, 1975's *Fleetwood Mac*. It's here, though, that the band's most commercially successful incarnation first took shape, as Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks joined their ranks. The blend of styles is all present and correct, right from the off. Buckingham provides the guitar-rock grit, Nicks the ethereal hippy excursions and Christine McVie the trademark piano-led soft rock. Nicks is on fine form with the wonderful *Rhiannon* and *Landslide*. Buckingham's *Monday Morning* is a standout and both McVies gel nicely with Christine's *Say You Love Me*. When the Mac let themselves off the leash, they serve up the expansive rock of *World Turning*, a precursor to *The Chain*. The dodgy ode to gold-digging of *Sugar Daddy* should be consigned to a bygone era, though. The Deluxe edition clocks in at 46 tracks and includes early versions of the album, as well as a collection of live tracks from a 1975 tour. There are no major revelations on the works-in-progress, but the in-concert cuts are a fine document. Most noteworthy are takes on Peter Green-era tracks, with Buckingham's guitar chops shining on *Oh Well* and *The Green Manalishi*. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10

INXS

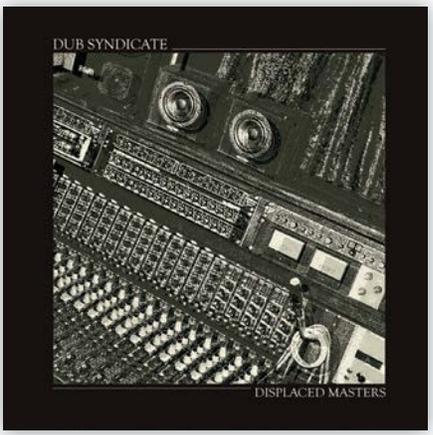
KICK 30

UNIVERSAL MUSIC

Kick was INXS's apotheosis – a perfect amalgamation of stadium-friendly pop-rock boasting the charismatic Michael Hutchence, plus memorable riffs that combined Keith Richards' swagger with Nile Rodgers' funkiness. Designed as an album where every song could be a single – it actually contains five perfectly honed classics – there's very little filler here. As *Kick*'s last reissue was released only in 2012, Universal have worked with Abbey Road Studios to provide new remasters, and Miles Showell oversaw the half-speed remastering for the 180g two-LP vinyl set reviewed here. Although the original album was impeccably produced by Chris Thomas, these remasters breathe new life into an already terrific record. *Guns In The Sky* has never sounded punchier and there's an even sharper clarity to those earworm guitars on *New Sensation* and *Need You Tonight*. Despite the synthetic strings that distract you during *Never Tear Us Apart*, it remains one of the finest classic-rock ballads of the 80s. Meanwhile, the crunchy Stones raunch of *Tiny Daggers* is a revelation. Andrew Farriss recently said this new version sounds "like vinyl on steroids". Can you *Kick* it? Yes, you can… *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10



Dub Syndicate

DISPLACED MASTERS

ON-U SOUND

On-U Sound turn their attention to the early-80s catalogue of the mighty Dub Syndicate following 2016's re-pressing of the early works of African Head Charge. Masterminded by Adrian Sherwood, Dub Syndicate ultimately became the musical vehicle of Style Scott, the former Roots Radics and Creation Rebel drummer murdered in his Jamaica home in 2014. Mastered from the original tapes, *Displaced Masters* features nine suitably laconic stripped-back takes from the Syndicate's early career and is one of six reissues in the campaign, including rare second album *One Way System* – originally a cassette-only release on New York label ROIR. The great Bim Sherman appears on three tracks here, including the excellent *Money Dealers* and *Haunted Ground,* the latter illuminated by Scott's skittering hi-hats. These are largely fairly raw recordings, but they offer an insight into one of the British label's best-loved acts. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

7/10

Chris Difford

CHRIS TO THE MILL

DEMON RECORDS

With Squeeze's critical stock once again as high as their early-80s peak years – thanks to their sterling last two albums, 2015's *Cradle To Grave* and recent *The Knowledge* – now feels like an apposite time to get reacquainted with co-songwriter Chris Difford's solo works. *Chris To The Mill* scoops up his three long-players to date – *I Didn't Get Where I Am* (2002), *The Last Temptation of Chris* (2008) and *Cashmere If You Can* (2011). Difford's lyrical prowess is on display throughout – and not just on those puntastic album titles. If his debut solo effort was an unassuming affair, then *Temptation...*, which has songwriting collaborations with Boo Hewerdine, expands the musical canvas. Best of the lot is *Cashmere...*, by which time Difford had fully found his feet as a confident vocalist, and he rocks out on the glammy *1975*, swampy *Cotton Tops* and jazzy *Upgrade Me Please*. Don't let these slip under your radar. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

7/10

Jóhann Jóhannsson

IBM 1401, A USER'S MANUAL

4AD

Acclaimed nowadays for his soundtracks, Jóhann Jóhannsson initially made his mark in his Icelandic homeland by helping start Kitchen Motors, a genre-defying artists' organisation, at the turn of the century. His first solo releases – mixing minimalist classical influences with electronica – emerged from these experiments, but after 2006's *IBM 1401...* he'd define a methodology which could limit his work. This fourth album combined solemn strings and eerie electronic sounds with recordings made by his father of one of the country's first computers 'singing', plus spoken-word samples from an accompanying instructional tape. Recorded with the City Of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra, its first four movements combined the influences of Henryk Górecki and Arvo Pärt to great effect, but sentiment gets the better of the saccharine fifth act, which strays into Craig Armstrong territory. A clear-vinyl reissue offers two bonus live recordings. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10

Skids

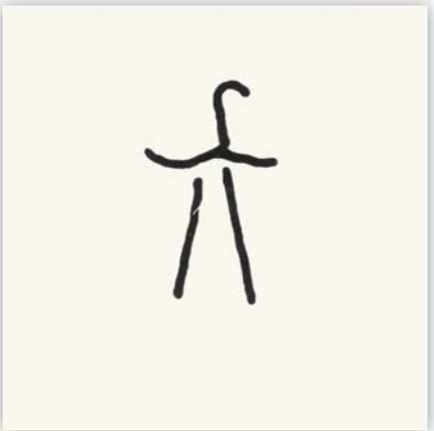
BURNING CITIES

PLEDGEMUSIC

The career of Scottish punks Skids was short, but left its mark, as the recent reissue of 1979's *Scared To Dance* will remind you. All it takes is *Kings Of The New World Order*'s introduction, or the two ominous bass notes seconds into *A World On Fire*, for memories of their biggest hit, *Into The Valley*, to flood back. No matter that the latter's acoustic guitars are replaced by others engaged in more predictable activity, nor that the late Stuart Adamson's replacement, Bruce Watson, reminds us – with that famous bagpipe guitar sound – that they both relocated to Big Country. *Desert Dust* aside – a closing, subdued anti-war elegy reminiscent of the Levellers – Richard Jobson's in gruff, sometimes almost gothic voice here, especially on the gobby *This Is Our World*. The band, meanwhile, hammer out chugging riffs fuelled by nostalgia, never more than on the apocalyptic terrace anthem that's the title track. The Skids are (re)united. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10



Xylouris White

MOTHER

BELLA UNION

Comprising the talents of Cretan lute player George Xylouris and Australian drummer Jim White of Dirty Three fame, Xylouris White are a virtuosic duo. Their third album, following *Goats* and *Black Peak*, is a celebration of "new life", these two pre-eminent musical pathfinders interweaving with dazzling fluidity. White's perpetual free-jazz motion drives along Xylouris' dexterous fretboard brilliance and yearning baritone on a record of craggy folk wonder. On *Only Love*, they hit an urgent momentum, while *Motorcycle Kondilies* stretches out in exploratory fashion across seven minutes. White's rolling toms grow ominously into the beguiling *Daphne* as the Cretan's brooding scalic playing summons a climactic conclusion. The superb musicianship reaches its peak on *Call And Response,* the pair answering one another's challenges in expert style, before closer *Lullaby* unfurls in gentle hypnotic splendour. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

7/10

Machine Head

CATHARSIS

NUCLEAR BLAST

Robb Flynn, Machine Head frontman, spits: "Wooooah, fuck the world!" on opener *Volatile*. Backed by a brutal deluge of drums and riffs, it would appear that it's business as usual for the Bay Area bruisers. In 1994, they revived a scene that was in dire need of fresh blood with the fired-up debut *Burn My Eyes*. While pretenders to the MH throne as 'saviours of metal' stepped in to steal the spotlight under the guise of nu-metal, MH lost the plot – let's forget *The Burning Red* and *Supercharger*. They were back on form with *The Blackening*, so what of album number nine? Well, it's an epic 75 minutes long and anyone seeking their familiar brute force will be satisfied with *Beyond The Pale*, *Psychotic*, *California Bleeding*, *Triple Beam*, *Grind You Down* and the Lemmy-saluting *Razorblade Smile*. There's melody and groove, too, and the subtle *Bastards* – from its tender opening to Dropkick Murphys-esque rallying-cry finale – is the highlight of a pretty solid album. *Dan Biggane*

VERDICT

7/10

Simple Minds

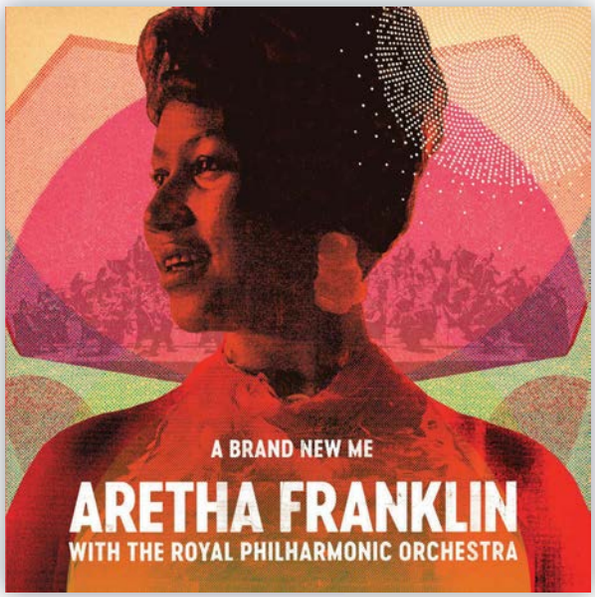
WALK BETWEEN WORLDS

BMG

Like their close cousins U2, Simple Minds have attempted to tweak their stadium-rock formula over the years, but seem to have ultimately concluded that going back to basics may be the best survival strategy. Last year's acoustic re-imagining of their back catalogue was a decent placeholder, but *Walk Between Worlds* is their first collection of new studio material since 2014's *Big Music*. Its concise eight tracks stand or fall on their ability to pull off those trademark juggernaut choruses. Opener *Magic* fails to fully ignite, but helped by an impressively fat bassline and Charlie Burchill's chiming guitars, *Summer* builds nicely to an anthemic middle section. Meanwhile, there's an almost Chemical Brothers feel to the squelchy electronica backing of standout *The Signal And The Noise*. To sit comfortably with its nostalgic lyrics, *Barrowland Star* couldn't be more 80s if it tried. And there's surely a nod to the chorus of their classic *Alive And Kicking* in the chorus of *Sense Of Discovery* – there's a sense of curating their legacy at play here. A Deluxe two-LP blue-coloured vinyl version features three extra tracks and is available exclusively from the band's web store. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

6/10



Aretha Franklin

A BRAND NEW ME

RHINO

Following the success of the 1.5-million selling posthumous *If I Can Dream* Elvis Presley collaboration, perhaps surprisingly here, the Royal Philharmonic are paired with the vocal takes of a bona-fide living legend. *A Brand New Me* marries the queen of soul and gospel's stunning original vocals to new arrangements recorded at Abbey Road Studios; Grammy-winning singer Patti Austin contributes stunning new backing vocals. The *Billboard* No. 1 classics *Respect*, *Think*, *Don't Play That Song (You Lied)* and *Angel* are all here, replete with their timeless soul power. When the orchestra's presence remains subtle, as with the stirring strings on *I Say A Little Prayer* and regal brass on *(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman*, it adds emotive depth; at other points, such as on Side B's covers of Elton John's *Border Song (Holy Moses)* and The Beatles' *Let It Be*, the orchestration feels more intrusive. Of course, Franklin's vocal performance is faultless throughout, reaching stratospheric heights on The Impressions' *People Get Ready*. For completists, this is a compelling collision between one of the greatest living vocalists and one of the world's finest orchestras. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

7/10

Ty Segall

FREEDOM'S GOBLIN

DRAG CITY

The prolific Californian treats us to a ninth full-length album by the age of 30. This time round, it's a two-LP genre-bending extended tour that took in five studios and a number of engineeers, including Steve Albini and Segall himself – and it shows. Opener *Fanny Dog* is a filthy brass-assisted grunge blast. It's followed by the woozy Lennon-like *Rain*, a sleazy fuzzed-up cover of Hot Chocolate's *Every1's A Winner* and the funky, Beck-evoking *Despoiler Of Cadaver*. On *When Mommy Kills You*, Segall sounds like late-90s Blur with Graham Coxon at the controls, while the gentler *My Lady's On Fire* is adorned by sax and breezy na-na-nas. Virtuosic guitar prevails throughout, with *She* a murky Black Sabbath-esque wig-out and *Shoot You Up* sailing pretty close to The Troggs' *Wild Thing*. The sax returns on the rabid Stooges-like *Talkin 3*. The juxtapositions become disorientating over four sides, with closer *And, Goodnight* descending into avant-garde noodling, but Segall crams more ideas into an LP than many of his contemporaries manage in an entire career. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

8/10

First Aid Kit

RUINS

COLUMBIA

Klara and Johanna Söderber follow 2014's breakthrough third album, *Stay Gold*, with a beautiful collection of beguiling songs. Produced by Tucker Martine (My Morning Jacket, Laura Veirs), *Ruins* was recorded away from the ghastly glare of commercial Music City, in Portland, Oregon, where the duo collaborated with R.E.M.'s Peter Buck, Wilco's Glenn Kotche and Midlake's McKenzie Smith. Starting with a lilting Stevie Nicks-like lament, album opener *Rebel Heart* develops subtly, building to a full-blown Fleetwood Mac breakdown, while the eerily enticing *Fireworks* would be a global chart-topper had it been served up by pop-megastar Adele… Indeed, *Ruins* is littered with some truly mesmerising moments: *To Live A Life*, *It's A Shame*, *My Wild Sweet Love* and *Distant Star* possess a delightful lyricism with sweet celestial vocals. Even the traditional Nashville honky-tonk of the album's lead single *Postcard* has a deep vulnerability and sincerity that only serves to charm the listener… so all is forgiven. *Dan Biggane*

VERDICT

8/10

Calexico

THE THREAD THAT KEEPS US

CITY SLANG

Prolific Tex-Mex duo Joey Burns and John Convertino serve up another slice of expansive, experimental indie-rock on earthy album number nine. Kicking off with the upbeat jangle of *End Of The World With You*, Calexico deliver a straight-up slice of accessible feelgood pop-rock that will get you merrily singing "Love in the age of the extremes" – a disarming introduction to an album that explores hope and fear. The jagged synth-ska of *Under The Wheels* flows seamlessly into the gentle Buddy Holly-esque shimmery tinkle of *The Town & Miss Lorraine*, before the jaunty flamenco of Spanish-sung *Flores Y Tamales*. Elsewhere, there's the nervous disco groove of *Another Space* and the lo-fi Ryan Adams-y *Music Box*; while *Voices In The Field*, *Bridge To Nowhere* and *Eyes Wide Awake* are the kind of highlights The Killers would've killed for on last year's *Wonderful Wonderful*. Possibly the most surprising moment is the deliciously dark menace of *Dead In The Water* – a grungy throwback that will delight listeners of a certain disposition. *Dan Biggane*

VERDICT

8/10

Tune-Yards

I CAN FEEL YOU CREEP INTO MY PRIVATE LIFE

4AD

Not only are Tune-Yards now a duo, with bassist Nate Brenner granted official membership by Merrill Garbus, but they've also dropped their aggravating tUnE-yArDs typography. Long gone, too, are the lo-fi trappings of yore – debut *Bird-Brains* was famously made on a voice recorder – though this fourth LP's production may still trouble pop purists. Still, it's their most accessible release to date; with its primitive beats and bare-bones arrangements, it recalls the work of ESG, especially on *ABC 123* and *Colonizer*, whose basslines show why Brenner's been promoted. Lead single *Look At Your Hands*, furthermore, could be a budget Jam and Lewis production of one of The Art Of Noise's first singles instead, while the initially stark *Heart Attack* dips its toes into gospel-soul waters left vacant by Gossip's dissolution. Garbus has lost none of her experimental urges, as the haunting *Home* attests, but this is still, by her standards, unexpectedly welcoming. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10

Captain

FOR IRINI

PLEDGEMUSIC

A welcome return after 12 years away, Captain's third album boasts glistening guitars, melodic synth-pop and hooks aplenty. Opener *Red Lights Coming* is instantly memorable and the counterpoint vocals of Rik Flynn and Clare Szembek work beautifully on the finely honed songcraft of *One In A Million*. *Out Of Range*'s intro tips its hat to the *Drive* soundtrack, before the band seamlessly swerve into more New Order-y guitar-rock territory. The stomping *In The Dock* heads to the dancefloor, while they take their foot off the gas for the dreamy *If You Really Want* and *It Comes In Waves*. As a nod to their 80s influences, they knock a cover of The Lotus Eaters' *The First Picture Of You* out of the park. There's a fitting cause for the record, too – guitarist Mario Athanasiou passed away in 2016. Proceeds from the sale of *For Irini* go to Guy's And St Thomas' Hospital Cancer Centre. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10

Nils Frahm

ALL MELODY

ERASED TAPES

To those familiar with Frahm's more recent work, *All Melody* may seem an unexpected shift. Neither a solo piano album, nor peppered with rousing pieces like *For – Peter – Toilet Brushes – More* from *Spaces*, 2013's distinguished live collection, it's instead an extended experiment with recently accumulated analogue instruments. Underlining their importance, they, like his new studio within Berlin's Funkhaus, once East Germany's acoustically flawless radio studios, provide the focus for the album's artwork. Naturally, there are still short, hushed, (almost) solo piano compositions, such as the jazzy *My Friend The Forest*, or *Forever Changeless*, which recalls 2011's *Felt*, and lengthier outings, too, with the title track and *#2* insisting synths are pivotal to the album. But the most satisfying aspects of this apparent attempt to escape his 'New Classical' tag come with *Sunson*, which exploits his bubbling, custom-built pipe organ, and the crepuscular *Human Range*, whose unusually rich arrangement includes trumpet, strings, timpani and a choir. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10

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Django Django

MARBLE SKIES

RIBBON MUSIC

Tropical grooves, shimmering synths, intricate melodies and a vocal style that sits somewhere between Gomez and David Byrne has been Django Django's default mode over their last two albums and much of their third is very much Django unchanged, especially on tracks such as *Champagne* and *Sundials*. However, it also feels fundamentally more experimental; its explorations in tone, pace and texture move from slower Mercury Rev-like ruminations to tracks that almost resemble euphoric euro pop such as *In Your Beat*, while *Real Gone* (an album highlight) is as straight-up dance music as they've done – agitated beats drive the track forward, as vocal melodies hover gently above. Despite the deviations in style and an overall leaning towards eclecticism, it still retains a coherent tone and sense of identity that the band cling onto which, for the most part, results in a measured, well-crafted and thoughtful selection of art pop. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

VERDICT

7/10

Son Lux

BRIGHTER WOUNDS

CITY SLANG

"Is this the future? Standing over me, will it grow/ Will it burst with sour blooms, what can rise from such a seed?" ponders Ryan Loft in the opening moments of his fifth album as Son Lux, now a fully fledged band project spread between New York and Los Angeles. *Forty Screams* is a letter to an unborn child, cloaked in doom-laden synths, and the following *Dream State* has a triumphant triggered vocal and clattering electronic snares. The light and shade present throughout *Brighter Wounds* is most evident on album centrepiece *All Directions*, which arrives in a flurry of dubby drums, before travelling through mournful piano chords, rising violins and effected vocals to an exultant choral resolution. *Aquatic* is a heartfelt tribute to a friend who died last year, while *Surrounded* sees an industrious beat collide with fizzing digital noise and Loft's assertion that "I am not my father's son". It's an album of juxtaposition: of musical styles, digital and organic, and darkness and hope; the result is an engaging, emotionally mature whole. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

8/10

Franz Ferdinand

ALWAYS ASCENDING

DOMINO

Franz Ferdinand's fifth offers "a triumphant recasting of the group", and it's true guitarist Nick McCarthy has left the band. Yet it's more likely they're referring to how *Always Ascending* was recorded, with Philippe Zdar, half of Cassius. This bodes well for a transformation, and his influence is tangible, but it's oddly disappointing to report that the album is instantly identifiable as Franz Ferdinand. Fans will nonetheless delight in the distinct clipped rhythm driving the title track, with its hints of filter house, and *Glimpse Of Love*, which leans gaily on past glories. They'll admire *The Academy Award*'s unconvinced cheer for its Sparks-ian wit, and note hints of LCD Soundsystem in *Feel The Love Go*'s extended instrumental section. They'll presumably mention post-punk and disco, too, but something seems lacking, even if it's simply the fresh qualities they advertise as present. It's as if they're running away from themselves, only to stand still. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10

Stick In The Wheel

FOLLOW THEM TRUE

FROM HERE

Stick In The Wheel aren't in the business of performing genteel, museum-piece interpretations of folk music. The East London band instead snap crocodile clips onto the knackers of working-class folksong, giving it new life and fresh intent. The five-piece, fronted by the strident voice of Nicola Kearey, who drops more aitches than a boxer in a letterpress studio on the raucous *White Copper Alley*, are at full-pelt on their third album as they tap into the enduring weirdness and anger abundant in English folk culture – "the good and bad of who we are", explains Kearey. These raw, haunted songs of hope, struggle and ritual, which veer from the propulsive, stalking doom of *Roving Blade* and the unadorned shanty, *Poor Old Horse*, to the ghostly, drones-and-electronica-draped finale *As I Roved Out*, are a thrilling reminder of our subversive national identity.
Chris Parkin

VERDICT

8/10

They Might Be Giants

I LIKE FUN

LOJINX

Johns Flansburgh and Linnell knock out songs at such a pace, one wonders whether they have gambling debts to pay. This year, they'll revive their Dial-A-Song website, but first: the 15 tunes that kept them busy through 2017. These rarely deviate from their typically quirky style, which has stood the test of time but rarely won significant numbers of new fans. Open Mike Eagle's patronage may change that, as might *An Insult To The Fact Checkers*, which finds them rocking out with admirable insouciance, but *This Microphone* lifts obviously from Harry Nilsson; and the sprightly *Let's Get This Over With* directly from their own playbook. Ludicrous lyrics still charm, however, including: "She pulled out the rug/ From under her doodlebug," from the power-pop *All Time What* and "You would give up your right arm to go back/ To when you had a right arm" from the pleasantly funky *Push Back The Hands Of Time*. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

6/10

The Go! Team

SEMICIRCLE

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

Ah, the sound of youth. We're not talking about The Go! Team, brainchild of Brighton's Ian Parton: they've been around a while, so are hardly new kids on the block. No, we're being literal. We're talking youth choirs. Parton roped in Detroit's for authenticity after having the unlikely idea of making the hullabaloo of marching bands central to a number of songs here. This fifth album consequently sounds like playtime for a group of enthusiastic, breakbeat-loving teenagers hyped on sugary donuts and Mega Monster. On *Mayday*, they yell excitedly over soulful brass riffs, while *Semicircle Song* features xylophones, awkwardly tuned trombones, plus a roll call of vocal guests. *Getting Back Up* is even more rough-hewn, and *The Answer's No – Now What's The Question?* sounds like it was recorded for Sarah Records in 1986. In fact, much of this album flaunts the same naïve, artless sincerity that would have delighted John Peel.
Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT

7/10

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If trashy, punky, fuzz-coated US alt-rock and relentless post-hardcore sounds rev your engine, then come fry your ears here – with vinyl pathfinder **Chris Parkin** as your guide…

Fans of righteously loud, super-fuzzed variants of fast and furious, hardcore-indebted rock 'n' roll will undoubtedly already be aware of US bands such as Drive Like Jehu, Obits, The Delta 72 and OFF! Bands who kick like a mule and swing like a noose. Well, San Diego's Hot Snakes include members of all of those bands, and are better than any of them.

Led by John Reis – aka Speedo, who also fronted 90s punk greaseballs Rocket From The Crypt – and Rick Froberg, Hot Snakes didn't merely burn brightly between 1999 and 2005, so much as explode in an earth-razing ball of dissonant, post-hardcore rage, lightning-fast boogie and psychedelic weirdness.

The band, who, curiously for rock 'n' roll reprobates of their ilk, were always more of a studio outfit, released three albums before cashing in their chips, and they haven't released anything of note since getting back together in 2011.

But 2018 sees them spring back into full action with a new album for Sub Pop. It's scheduled for spring, but in the meantime, the Seattle label is reissuing Hot Snakes' essential *Automatic Midnight* (2000), *Suicide Invoice* (2002) and *Audit In Progress* (2004) albums on coloured vinyl, with limited sticker sheets designed by Froberg. If relentlessly manic, downstroke riffola is your bag, then these reissues are an absolute no-brainer.

Louder still, perhaps, is the first-ever unlimited, non-bootleg Mudhoney live album, *LiE (Live In Europe)*, which, like Hot Snakes' reissues, comes courtesy of premier alt-rock peddlers and Mudhoney's long-time home, Sub Pop. What is most remarkable about this growling live behemoth is that the album, featuring songs from across the band's 30-year existence, and including an unexpected cover of Roxy Music's *Editions Of You*, was captured during their 2016 European tour. Yet the band's unique brand of scribbled, growling, primal rock 'n' roll is as powerful as ever, which bodes extremely well for their 10th album proper, which is also due for release later this year.

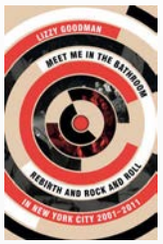
LA fuzz-punks No Age used to be on Sub Pop, but they've upped sticks and moved to the more psychedelically inclined Drag City for their latest album, *Snares Like A Haircut* – a propulsive trip with extra Big Muff, bright earworming riffs and the billowing, rotary-blade sound of what could easily be a lawnmower plugged into a stack of vintage amps. The duo's fifth album – their first since 2013 – is an addictive, full-throttle thing that manages to pitch up somewhere between My Bloody Valentine, Dinosaur Jr. and Shellac. Bliss. ●

LED BY JOHN REIS AND RICK FROBERG, HOT SNAKES DIDN'T MERELY BURN BRIGHTLY BETWEEN 1999 AND 2005, SO MUCH AS EXPLODE IN AN EARTH-RAZING BALL OF DISSONANT, POST-HARDCORE RAGE, LIGHTNING-FAST BOOGIE AND PSYCHEDELIC WEIRDNESS

VINYL BOOKS

Essential reads for vinyl lovers, covering everything from travelogues to technical knowledge and experimental record labels to a lovingly crafted history of modern pop – disappear into your records room with one of these for company…

Meet Me In The Bathroom



PRICE £20
Lizzy Goodman
Faber & Faber

Subtitled 'Rebirth And Rock And Roll In New York City, 2001–2011', this tome captures the NY scene through 161 oral histories. The movement it chronicles covers such luminaries as Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Interpol, but the story inevitably orbits around The Strokes – a band whose music defined their era.

Tim Book Two

PRICE £8.99
Tim Burgess
Faber & Faber

Following his 2012 autobiography, *Telling Stories*, Charlatan Tim Burgess turns his pen to his 'vinyl adventures from Istanbul to San Francisco'. Burgess begins his record-collecting quest by soliciting a vinyl wishlist from famous pals, then hunts down the original records in shops around the globe.

Mute: A Visual Document From 1978 - Tomorrow

PRICE £28
Terry Burrows with Daniel Miller
Thames & Hudson

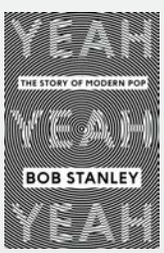
Daniel Miller opens up the photo archives to create this beautiful 320-page history. Contributions from many of Mute's artists, from Moby to Anton Corbijn, sit side-by-side with shots of machinery, merchandise, posters, art and other rarities, making this a definitive chronicle of the much-loved label.

Vinyl: The Art Of Making Records

PRICE £18.85
Mike Evans
New Burlington Books

This hefty and lavishly illustrated chronology of vinyl's history acts as an accessible primer for the new generation of record lovers. It covers key developments in recording technology and hardware, influential record labels, directories of stores, manufacturers, classic albums and much more.

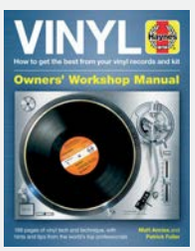
Yeah Yeah Yeah



PRICE £20
Bob Stanley
Faber & Faber

This comprehensive history of modern pop covers famous chart fare as well as going off-piste into more arcane territory – it also takes in the magazines and wider cultural phenomena the music spawned. But overall, it stays true to its original remit, and is a passionately written and engaging read.

Haynes Vinyl Owner's Manual



PRICE £22
Matt Anniss and Patrick Fuller
Haynes

Haynes' eminently practical guide to getting the best from your records and kit mixes in interesting diversions alongside the hands-on advice. Examples include articles on oddities such as timecode vinyl, a look back at the era when radio played the format and advice for perfecting your DJing. ●

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HOW TO BUY PHONO AMPLIFIERS

Giving a voice to your turntable, the phono amplifier is your cartridge's best friend. **Paul Rigby** explains all...

It could very well be the most ignored and least understood part of any hi-fi system. Yet, for anyone armed with a turntable, it is also arguably the most important. The phono amplifier is often looked upon with some bemusement because, for many people, they never see it. If you own a turntable, then you'll know all about the cartridge that hangs off the end of the tonearm. The stylus itself is the bit that enters the record grooves and 'reads' information from this area of the vinyl in a continuous, analogue form. Which is all very well and good. But how do you hear the music contained within?

If you've ever played a record without the rest of your hi-fi switched on and placed your ear near the stylus, you might have heard the tiny, tinny, screechy noises coming from the grooves as the stylus reads the musical information.

To hear the actual music in all its glory, you'll need to amplify that sound. A lot of people then look towards a basic amplifier to do that work. Well, it can't. The job is too big, too niche. Your basic integrated amplifier or pre-amplifier/power amplifier combo – or whatever it is that powers your hi-fi system – just doesn't have the specialised technology to reach down that low and amplify such a small signal (and it is tiny indeed). You need to call in a specialist for this and that's where the phono amplifier comes in.

The phono amplifier is there for one thing and one thing only. It takes that tiny, tinny, cartridge-produced sound and amplifies it. Not too much. Just enough to pass it onto the main amplifier. It's only at this point that the main amp can amplify it further for you to hear. Now, if you have such a specialist amplifier doing such a specific job with such an important signal, then you might

Arcam's rPhono is a solid option at a budget price point

now understand just how important the phono amplifier is to the overall sound: both in terms of what it can do, but also in terms of the quality of the phono amplifier itself.

IN OR OUT?

The reason a lot of vinyl lovers fail to notice that a phono amplifier is actually active in their hi-fi chain is because many phono amplifiers are hidden within their integrated amplifiers. The only evidence is the sight of two little sockets on the rear, under a label entitled 'Phono'.

This is where a lot of people plug in their turntables – a good and bad thing. It's a good thing because there is no extra setup involved; the manufacturer of the integrated amplifier has done all of that for you. All you have to do is plug in your turntable, turn on the main amplifier and you're off. It's also good because the built-in models take up no extra shelf space, which is ideal for those occupying rather cramped listening areas. Another positive is that the phono amplifier is essentially free of charge or, at least, built into the main amplifier price, so you don't notice it. Hence, this variant is good for people on a budget.

However, it's bad because built-in phono amplifiers tend on the whole to be cheaper, budget models, with cheaper components. Hence, sound quality tends to be lower. ▶

The Cyrus Phono Signature phono amp is designed for use with the PSX-R2 outboard power supply

THE PHONO AMPLIFIER IS THERE FOR ONE THING AND ONE THING ONLY. IT TAKES THAT TINY, TINNY, CARTRIDGE-PRODUCED SOUND AND AMPLIFIES IT

The Plinius Koru is a high-end phono amp offering impressive dynamics

It's also not ideal because, when a phono amplifier is situated inside the chassis of an integrated amplifier, it produces its own electrical noise, which can 'infect' the rest of the amplifier and, indeed, vice versa. Hence, the final sound quality can be reduced. So to enhance the sound quality from the phono amplifier, it's highly recommended to buy an external model. Such a box is plugged into the main amplifier and your turntable plugs into the external phono amp.

Separating the box not only negates any chance of noise infection, but the independent chassis of the external amp means that bigger, better and speciality kit of a higher quality can be used within. Yes, the price is higher, but the sound improves too.

SWITCHES, KNOBS 'N' STUFF

If you do decide to upgrade your phono amplifier to an external model, be prepared for that terrible word. The thing we all demand, but can't easily handle when we get it: choice.

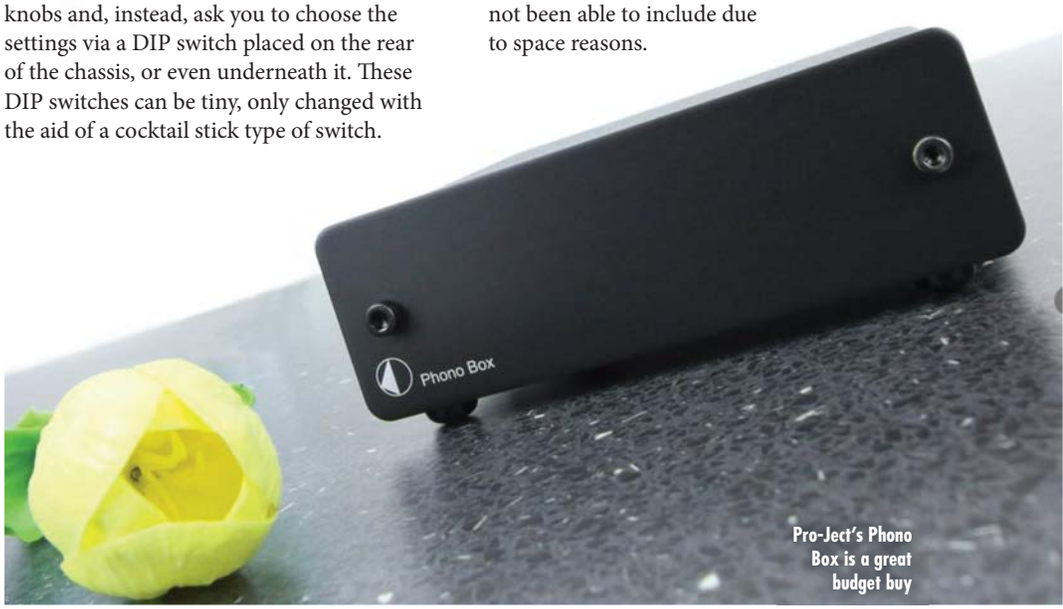
External phono amplifiers enhance sound quality because of what goes on inside their chassis, yes, but also by giving you the opportunity to tweak the settings to best suit your cartridge. Cartridges arrive in all shapes and sizes and with varying specifications. If your phono amplifier can match these different settings exactly, or as near as damn it, then that, in addition, will improve the sound of your cartridge and the hi-fi at large. Some of the settings will include seemingly scary things such as gain and loading and the like, but don't worry. As long as you read the manual of the phono amplifier carefully and retain the specification sheet of your cartridge, all will be well.

More expensive phono amplifiers allow you to change these settings with customer-friendly knobs and switches on the front of the chassis fascia. Lower-cost phono amplifiers cut corners by removing these knobs and, instead, ask you to choose the settings via a DIP switch placed on the rear of the chassis, or even underneath it. These DIP switches can be tiny, only changed with the aid of a cocktail stick type of switch.

Again, don't panic if faced with controls such as this. Just study the manual and take your time. Once you've worked your way through the manual – and they're often not very long – then you'll quickly grasp the issues.

PHONO-AMPLIFER BUYER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

So, what phono amplifier should you buy? Here's a broad selection from three different price points. This is just a suggested list, no more. There are lots of others we"ve not been able to include due to space reasons.



Pro-Ject's Phono Box is a great budget buy

BUDGET UP TO £600

This is a category with plenty of quality designs. Here's a small selection…

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO CP1

PRICE £100
WWW.CAMBRIDGEAUDIO.COM
Aimed at users who have a moving-magnet cartridge – which is most budget and some midrange turntables, this diminutive chassis features a Class A gain stage that produces excellent sound quality for the size. Including an aluminium front end, it provides low noise output to enhance the sonics.

PRO-JECT PHONO BOX

PRICE £135
WWW.HENLEYAUDIO.CO.UK
It might be a wee thing, but it's pretty meaty for its size, in terms of sheer weight, offering a power switch on the front with inputs and outputs on the rear with a subsonic filter for warped records. Handling both moving magnet and moving coil, it's a great little product.

ARCAM RPHONO

PRICE £349
WWW.ARCAM.CO.UK
This book-sized, solid-as-a-brick chassis handles moving-coil and moving-magnet cartridges and even has a rumble filter for low-frequency noise (or warped records, to you and me). The unit features excellent sound quality, which is so good it really does present top value at its price point.

MIDRANGE £600 TO £2,000

With more design budget, you'll notice more finesse and features…

REGA ARIA

PRICE £798

WWW.REGA.CO.UK

It doesn't look particularly exciting and there's not a great deal to it, but it's effective. Supporting moving magnet and moving coil, you can tweak the moving-coil area to make the most of your cartridge, although you'll need to tackle tiny switches on the rear to do so. Sound is high quality throughout.

PATHOS IN THE GROOVE

PRICE £1,299

WWW.PATHOSACOUSTICS.COM

Able to target a range of cartridge types, the minimal styling on this unit will attract many, while on a more technical level, the company has separated the phono amplifier's power supply into a different box to avoid electrical interference. Officially a 'good thing'.

CYRUS PHONO SIGNATURE/ PSX-R2

PRICE £1,990

WWW.CYRUSAUDIO.COM

This dual-box setup allows you to fine-tune the settings of your cartridge with ease. In fact, you can do those very things with the remote. The amplifier has four inputs and each of them can be changed to suit. The Cyrus can also handle higher-end systems with balanced connections.

HIGH-END £2,000+

Pricier amplifier designs tend to use higher-quality components and fittings…

ICON AUDIO PS3 MKII

PRICE £2,300

WWW.ICONAUDIO.COM

Valves are great talking points at parties but, if you really want to hear what they can do, you need quality. This two-box system (to reduce noise) provides a superb, smooth-yet-punchy sound with a neat 'volume' knob on the front for gain and a mono/stereo switch on the front.

PLINIUS KORU

PRICE £3,400

JORDANACOUSTICS.CO.UK

The Plinius is a useful contrast to the PS3 to the left, in that it moves away from the sublime charm of valves, and instead provides accuracy and a very low-noise approach to the overall sound. Combine that with some impressive dynamics and transparency and you've got one impressive phono amp.

AESTHETIX IO ECLIPSE

PRICE £17,000

WWW.AESTHETIX.NET

Arguably the best phono amplifier on the planet, with a volume control for each channel, this all-valve-based phono amplifier can be split into more boxes by dividing the power supply into twin boxes for an extra £5,000 or so. It remains beautiful on the eye and the ear. ●

PRO-JECT PRIMARY

SUB-BUDGET TURNTABLE WITH OM 5E CARTRIDGE

£189 *www.henleyaudio.co.uk 01235 511166*

If you're starting to get into – or back into – vinyl, but you're strapped for cash, **Paul Rigby** recommends the Pro-Ject Primary

Analogue playback is becoming very popular again. As is often the case, however, money is the problem. There's not a lot of it swimming around the place, especially when other commitments come to the fore.

There's a wealth of turntables currently competing in the market, all hoping to provide the solution. They can be bought for not a great deal of money and target those who are getting into vinyl for the first time. They're also designed to appeal to those who gave up on vinyl a long time ago, but who are attracted to picking up a tonearm again because of the increasing vinyl resurgence. Others coming into the fold are younger people who realise the concept of downloads and streaming is tantamount to renting your music and not actually owning it.

Such turntables are often priced at below £250 – a genre I term as 'sub budget'. To come in at a low price point, hi-fi companies often merely stick a brand-name badge on an OEM design template. There may be a few tweaks to add originality: different-shaped knobs, a new cartridge headshell, things like that. Then they market these decks by highlighting lifestyle features that will surely help the sale. You know the sort of thing: automatic-play operation; USB ports to 'rip' your vinyl; Bluetooth facilities to 'stream' your music to a compatible device such as your phone; DJ-type facilities… and more.

The Primary is based on Pro-Ject's Elemental turntable design and sports the Ortofon OM 5E with its elliptical stylus

Pro-Ject's Primary is not based upon an OEM design. The company, based in Vienna, Austria, owns its own factory. It makes its own parts and, hence, can sell those parts at a low price. Nor does it arrive with lots of toys to fill a press release. Its aim, in fact, is to purposely reject those parts, for the good of your wallet and for the good of your ears.

Why? Well, the more money spent perfecting the sonic basics and the less spent on toys means more investment is going into the music-playing bit of the turntable. Also, more toys operating on the plinth results in more noise, to 'infect' the final playing experience.

SIMPLE, CLASSIC

What you have here, then, is a two-speed, straight-armed turntable based upon Pro-Ject's Elemental turntable design, using the same motor and power supply, plus hinged dust cover and included phono cables. The belt runs around the outer rim of the platter and speed changes occur by moving that belt across the exposed pulley. This is a good thing, since an auto-speed changer can create noise, too; the Ortofon OM 5E is a worthy addition. Arriving with a welcome elliptical stylus, it's worth £55 on its own.

Our sound tests reveal that the Primary can't compete with the slightly more expensive Lenco L-3808 turntable in terms of sheer bass control, but that the Primary performs very well against other belt-drive systems in this price area, offering a clean and open suite of lower frequencies, with no obvious noise or bass bloom to infect the mids.

That midrange sounds airy and relaxed. Guitars are infused with detail, vocal deliveries provide emotion and subtlety, while pianos and treble-infused cymbals offer admirable tonal realism for the price and enough space for realistic reverb tails, with a sense of clarity that will draw you in and capture your attention. The fact is, all – and I mean all – of the build budget for this turntable has been devoted to audiophile precepts. Pro-Ject have tried to get the most, in sonic terms, from very little money. The result of this is that you can buy the Primary with confidence and also be assured that none of your hard-earned cash has gone to waste on frivolousness and shiny, but little-used, accessories that seemed a good idea at the time. Surely, the point – the entire point – of hi-fi is music. Hence, if you're going to spend money on hi-fi, shouldn't all of it be dedicated to that end? The Primary's, um, primary job is just that. Music. ●

THE MIDRANGE SOUNDS AIRY AND RELAXED. GUITARS ARE INFUSED WITH DETAIL, VOCAL DELIVERIES PROVIDE EMOTION AND SUBTLETY, WHILE PIANOS AND TREBLE-INFUSED CYMBALS OFFER ADMIRABLE TONAL REALISM FOR THE PRICE

VERDICT

PROS

FOCUSED UPON MUSIC
SPACIOUS MIDS
WELL SPECIFIED PRICE
BROAD AND OPEN SOUNDSTAGE
BASS CLARITY

CONS

BASS CONTROL

SCORE
27/33 1/3

VPI PLAYER

LIFESTYLE TURNTABLE WITH PHONO AMPLIFIER

£1,500 *www.renaissanceaudio.co.uk 0131 555 3922*

Looking for an all-in-one turntable, but want a bit of quality? **Paul Rigby** may have found the solution in VPI's Player

VPI used to sell an all-in-one turntable called the Nomad, sporting a sturdy build, straight tonearm, built-in cartridge, phono amplifier and a headphone amplifier, for around £1,000. They didn't sell it for too long, though, as its fair-to-middling sonic performance ensured it had only rather modest overall appeal.

That's all about to change, though, with two brand-new and upgraded Nomads. Okay, VPI isn't naming the new variants 'Nomads', but that, in effect, is what they are. If you compared the old Nomad with the new Player and Cliffwood, then you'd be struck immediately by the similarities.

We grabbed the lifestyle variant of the pair, the Player, for review. We noted its higher price of £1,500, but also spotted the upgraded parts over the original Nomad – including a better plinth, main bearing, 9" arm with stainless-steel tube, platter, motor and power supply. The Player features a similar straight tonearm and an Ortofon 2M Red MM cartridge to hang off it. Both the arm and cartridge are set up in the factory. The well-built MDF plinth includes an exposed pulley holding the belt, which runs around the platter's rim. To change the speed from 33 to 45rpm and back again, you need to move the belt up and down the pulley wheel.

On the rear of the plinth are the plugs to hold the bundled cables, plus earth wire. Hidden behind is the built-in phono amplifier. Hence, the included cables must be plugged into an amplifier and not an external phono amplifier.

Set up and ready to go, the included phono amplifier means you don't have to be concerned if you have an amplifier without this facility built in. It also means that you can plug the Player directly into

the rear of powered speakers: ideal for those looking for a hi-fi system with a small footprint. You'll also notice that the power supply is built into the plinth. All you need to do here is plug in the included power cable and slot the other end into the mains.

Around the front, on the left is the unusual addition of a built-in headphone amplifier. You'll find the mini-socket (3.5mm) for your headphones on the top of the plinth. There's also a rotary volume knob included.

LIFESTYLE CHOICE

This is a lifestyle turntable, so there's no switch to turn off the internal phono amplifier for use with an external model. If you want to do this, a free upgrade option is available via your dealer.

In sonic terms, there are obvious compromises because of this. An external phono amp would improve matters, but would also remove the entire point of the Player. In tests, the unit provided a clean and open soundstage, with a sense of accuracy that worked well for subtle instruments and low-lying and shy secondary percussion, while lead vocals benefited in terms of emotional delivery. Meanwhile, bass was both precise and punchy. The headphone amplifier was a little warm in tone, but offered a relatively low noise performance, with firm lower frequencies and a nuanced, textured midrange.

Don't forget this is an easy to use, plug-and-play lifestyle product aimed primarily at beginners who want rather more elegance and élan in their vinyl source, or those who might be a little nervous of hi-fi in general. For those people who are not interested in upgrades, tweaks and all of that slightly scary audiophile stuff, the VPI Player provides admirable sound quality and an excellent build standard, together with a host of features that require no setup and tweaking to work. A quality machine, the Player is an ideal entry point into the glorious world of vinyl. ●

THIS IS AN EASY TO USE, PLUG-AND-PLAY LIFESTYLE PRODUCT AIMED AT BEGINNERS WHO WANT RATHER MORE ELEGANCE IN THEIR VINYL SOURCE

VPI's Player combines stylish looks with plug-and-play convenience, adding up to a compelling 'lifestyle' turntable option

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
QUALITY, SOLID BUILD	AS A LIFESTYLE DESIGN, NOTHING
GOOD VALUE	
PUNCHY BASS	
OPEN SOUNDSTAGE	
AVAILABLE FEATURES	

SCORE

30/33⅓

PIONEER
HDJ-X10
HEADPHONES

£299 *www.pioneerdj.com*

John Pickford tries Pioneer's flagship DJ headphones to see how they fare at home…

Headphones, like loudspeakers, are designed and marketed for both professional and domestic use. Domestic equipment often has a more relaxed, musical sound, bringing out the best in whatever music it's asked to reproduce; it loves all of your records.

Paradoxically, pro headphones usually offer anything but an accurate or musical sound, instead going for a hyped mid-bass presentation designed to make kick drums go off into the stratosphere at 100Hz. This is to disguise the fact that they're unable to reproduce proper, grown-up bass below 50Hz or so. Not so the new flagship HDJ-X10 headphones from Pioneer.

Designed with input from professional touring DJs, the HDJ-X10s sit at the top of Pioneer's new HDJ range, offering an unprecedented (for DJ cans) frequency response of 5Hz to 40kHz. They're solid enough to withstand the knocks inevitable with life on the club circuit, yet look smart enough to be used at home or in a recording studio. They come finished in black or silver.

Durable enough to withstand the US Military Standard Shock Test, the HDJ-X10s are the only headphones to feature a nano coating on the polyurethane leather earpads and headband, making them resistant to sweat and easily wiped clean. The outer casing is textured to improve grip when handling, while the headband is flexible enough to be twisted without breaking. The clever swivel mechanism ensures they remain comfortable however they're worn, while the over-ear fit is snug and effectively blocks out external noise.

The headphones are housed in a smart-yet-tough black carrying case, complete with a handle and internal pouch. The supplied cable is detachable (how many cans are junked because of a broken fixed cable?), with a secure push-button locking mechanism. The review pair came with a 1.2m coiled cable (3m extended length), though a 1.6m straight cable is also supplied, so you have both a choice according to your preference and a handy spare. These cables, and the earpads, are available from Pioneer as replacements. A 6.3mm jackplug adaptor is supplied and it's a threaded type to ensure you have a secure connection.

Avoiding the hyped bass sound of most DJ headphones, the HDJ-X10s possess a refined sound usually found only with similarly priced or more expensive audiophile designs. I used them to listen to iTunes on my Mac and plugged into my old Vestax mixer; however, when used with a top-end Naim headphone amp playing vinyl via a Rega RP10 turntable, the HDJ-X10s really started to sing. Bass response is deep and rich, mid frequencies clear and detailed, and the upper treble is crisp with plenty of air and sparkle.

The Pioneer HDJ-X10s are a classy product, offering the best to DJs, music producers and just about anyone who appreciates high-fidelity sound. ●

VERDICT

PROS

WIDEBAND FREQUENCY RESPONSE

FLEXIBLE AND COMFORTABLE

SOLID CONSTRUCTION

CONS

LACK OF BASS HYPE BELOVED OF SOME DJS

SCORE
31/33⅓

WIN!

A COMPLETE TEAC HI-FI SETUP WORTH £499

Long Live Vinyl have teamed up with our good friends at TEAC to give one lucky reader the chance to win a superb TEAC TN-400BT Analogue Turntable with built-in Bluetooth and a set of LS-M100 powered speakers.

The TN-400BT features high-quality Bluetooth aptX wireless audio transmission, enabling listeners to stream their records wirelessly, as well as three-speed belt-drive mechanism (with aluminium die-cast platter), a low-friction spindle for stable rotational speed, static-balanced S-shaped tone-arm, Audio-Technica MM-type cartridge and a built-in phono EQ amp with subsonic filter. It also has a 16-bit/48khHz USB digital output for PC recording and gold-plated RCA jacks for line/phono output.

The LS-M100 speakers deliver wide-range response from a compact body for concise listening even at low volumes – with a wide frequency response of 80Hz-22kHz. This ported design has an efficient 14-watts-per-channel power amp and is equipped with RCA pin jack and stereo mini-jack line-input terminals, enabling the system to be connected to a CD player or record deck. For more information on TEAC products, go to www.teac-audio.eu.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply visit **www.longlivevinyl.net/teaccomp** and answer the following question:

In what year was TEAC founded?

A 1903
B 1953
C 2003

Terms & Conditions

The closing date is 12.00am GMT 1 February. The editor's decision is final. This competition is open to over-18s only. For full terms and conditions, please go to anthem-publishing.com/competition-tcs

Part 1

VINTAGE TURNTABLE DIY PROJECT

Want to get your vintage turntable in modern-day working order? **Huw Price** puts a Garrard 301 on a pedestal…

Widespread understanding of the inherent sound quality and the engineering excellence of some vintage audio equipment ensures that no truly professional recording studio can be without a few choice bits and pieces, nestling among the state-of-the-art computers and digital converters. Similarly, valve hi-fi amps retain a strong following among dedicated enthusiasts, as discussed during our recent series on restoring a Leak TL/12 Plus.

Fans of vintage hi-fi also value certain turntables from vinyl's golden era of the late 1950s through to the 1970s. It's hardly surprising, when you consider that, in the nine or so decades between the first phonographic discs and the ascendancy of CD as the main consumer carrier format, manufacturers learned a thing or two about building record players.

It was a time when high-end gear was built to a standard rather than to a price, so a remarkable number of these turntables have survived. We're talking brand names such as EMT, Lenco, Thorens and Garrard. Although these turntables produce superb results when working properly, their performance can be compromised by poor installation and neglected maintenance.

Sadly, vintage-turntable bargains have become harder to find now that everybody is online, but plenty of them remain long abandoned in sheds, garages and lofts. Maybe you've got one knocking about the house and you're curious about how to get it up and running? Or perhaps you've seen vintage turntables at the heart of ultra-high-end hi-fi systems and you've been curious about what on earth they're doing there?

Over the next couple of issues, we'll be discussing how to build a plinth for a 1950s Garrard 301, matching it up with a more modern tonearm and getting the whole system running properly. Although we're focusing on just one specific turntable, the basic principles will be applicable to other makes and models – and if you can put a proper plinth together, your turntable will sound great and look like the coolest thing ever.

BY 1957, THE BEARING LUBRICATION WAS CHANGED TO OIL. GARRARD 301 ENTHUSIASTS CAN GET VERY HEATED OVER WHETHER GREASE OR OIL IS THE BEST LUBE, BUT FOR VARIOUS REASONS, WE AREN'T GOING THERE…

GARRARD 301

Considered by some to be the best of the vintage British turntables, the Garrard 301 was built between 1953 and 1965 and was a common sight in studios and radio stations in the UK and throughout Europe. Back in the day, its main rival was the Swiss Thorens TD 124 and both of these models were known as 'transcription drive' turntables.

A rubber idler wheel driven by a substantial electro motor butted up against the inside rim of the platter to drive it. The technology was retained for the Garrard 401 – which some regard as superior, while others don't – but Thorens and indeed the rest of the hi-fi world soon changed over to the belt-drive turntable designs that remain the industry standard to this day.

Nevertheless, a hardcore of Garrard enthusiasts simply carry on using their supposedly inferior Garrard turntables because they prefer the sound. This is particularly true in Japan, where 301s enjoy a cult following. Of the estimated 65,000 units produced, it's not beyond the realm of possibility that most have ended up in the Far East.

The earliest grease-bearing 301 had a grey finish with black

Our Garrard 301 has seen better days, so some restoration work will be needed

faceplates and raised lettering, and this was followed by the cream-finish version with silver faceplates. By 1957, Garrard was using a cream finish with black faceplates, and the bearing lubrication was changed to oil. Garrard 301 enthusiasts can get very heated over whether grease or oil is the best lube, but for various reasons, we aren't going there…

These days, Garrard 301s often command fairly high prices, depending on their condition. There are specialists – notably Loricraft, Peak HiFi, Perfect Sound and the Classic Turntable Company – offering everything you could ever need, from replacement parts to total refinishing and refurbishment. Barring catastrophic damage to the chassis, no Garrard 301 can be considered a total write-off.

Completely refurbished and clean, unrestored examples in custom-made plinths can be very expensive. The one we're featuring has a few lacquer chips around its screwholes and the tell-tale scar from the suction pad of one of those stick-on 'dust bug' record brushes that were all the rage during the 1970s. Our turntable is in working condition and we're hoping this project will reveal the sonic slam, superb dynamics and solid bass that the Garrard 301 is renowned for.

This rubber idler wheel butts up against the inner rim of the platter to drive it

REGA RB300

Although nowhere near as 'vintage' as the Garrard 301, the Rega RB300 tonearm is nevertheless regarded as a classic. Rega describe "five years of dabbling and two years of intensive development" before the RB250 and RB300 tonearms went into production in 1983. Rega even won an international award for excellence in the field of aluminium die-casting, for the one-piece tubular tonearm with its integrated headshell.

Compared to high-end tonearms of the 60s and 70s, the RB300 was an extremely streamlined and modern design. Finished in matt black with a silver counterweight, the vertical tracking force is set by a dial to the side of the pivot housing. A slider control provides frictionless anti-skating control courtesy of a magnet, rather than the dangling weights commonly seen on older tonearms.

Critical reception was extremely enthusiastic, because the RB300 was deemed to compete sonically with far more expensive tonearms. Unsurprisingly, the model was a huge commercial success and remained in production for many years. It's since been superseded by the RB303 in Rega's product range, and second-hand prices can be reasonable, so shop around. There's also a vast range of modifications and products purporting to elevate audio performance.

Despite the components coming from different eras, the Garrard 301/Rega RB300 combination is very popular, so we'll be giving it a try.

READY TO RUMBLE

The reason why idler-wheel turntables almost died out after the introduction of belt-drive turntables can be summarised in one word – 'rumble'. A powerful motor with a spindle notched for various speeds presses against a rubber idler wheel, which in turn presses against the inside of the disc platter. This physical coupling means that vibrations from the fast-spinning motor can be transmitted through the platter and be picked up by the cartridge. The resulting low-frequency garbage is often clearly audible, and poorly configured Garrard turntables can be problematic in this regard.

The belt-drive design allows a suspended motor turning at a much lower speed to drive the platter, via a flexible belt. This effectively decouples the motor from the platter and eliminates the rumble issue. However… some hi-fi enthusiasts feel that the speed of belt-driven turntables is less stable than idler drives – especially when the belt begins to wear and stretch.

It is also argued that certain signals can cause stylus drag in the grooves, resulting in inconsistent platter speed when motor torque is insufficient to power through it. In this regard, the high-torque motors of idler-drive turntables may have the advantage over low-torque belt-drive motors. The upshot is that

A powerful motor and an oil-lubricated spindle housing are located on the underside of the chassis

idler-wheel turntables are supposed to sound more rhythmically stable and solid than their belt-driven rivals. The knock-on effects are said to be better stereo imaging and a greater sense of realism.

However, old idler-wheel turntable parts do wear out and the potential for superior speed stability can be lost. Even when the turntable itself is functioning properly, measures have to be taken to eliminate rumble. Vintage hi-fi preamps often have bass roll-off switching for this very reason, but nobody would want to lose out on their low end these days. Instead, the key is to mount the turntable in a suitable plinth.

ANALOGUE PLINTH

Clearly turntables and tonearms must be mounted in something, and the simplest thing would be to cut a Garrard 301-sized hole in a large piece of plywood, drill a hole for the tonearm and bolt them both onto the board. With a leg in each corner, you would be good to go, but everything we said about rumble would be painfully obvious. Instead, Garrard owners mount their turntables on specially constructed plinths and, broadly speaking, there are two schools of thought about the best way to do this – high mass or damping.

THE SIMPLEST THING WOULD BE TO CUT A GARRARD 301-SIZED HOLE IN A LARGE PIECE OF PLYWOOD, DRILL A HOLE FOR THE TONEARM AND BOLT THE DECK ONTO THE BOARD – BUT THE RUMBLE WOULD BE PAINFULLY OBVIOUS

The first requires a plinth constructed from several layers of plywood with cutouts to provide clearance for the Garrard's motor and linkages. The layers are glued together to form a very heavy solid block and the turntable is secured to the top using screws or bolts. The idea is that the plinth is able to dissipate mechanical noise and prevent it from reaching the platter.

Rega's single-piece tonearm casting was revolutionary when the RB300 was introduced

The second approach involves building a robust frame that supports a mounting board that holds the turntable and the tonearm. The mounting board drops into the frame and sits on top of squash balls located at each corner. Quite how this eliminates rumble isn't clear, but plinths built this way by Loricraft and others are well regarded. As with all things hi-fi, each design has its fans and detractors, so we are planning to build and test one of each. But that will have to wait until next time… ●

To be in with a chance of seeing your record collection in *Long Live Vinyl*, email your details and a picture to gary.walker@anthem-publishing.com

DARREN JONES

The vinyl collection of reader **Darren Jones** features all manner of autographed rarities and collectables in unusual formats – plus the odd surprise in the post…

What was the first record you bought?
"I remember listening to records as a child while visiting my grandparents (John Lennon being a favourite, and Paul McCartney doing *Mull Of Kintyre* being on heavy rotation), then it was The Police on the neighbours' record player – so buying records seemed like the natural progression. The first record I bought was Duran Duran's *The Reflex* on 7", and I still have it! The second 7" was John Parr, *St. Elmo's Fire*."

What artists and genres are you most interested in?
"For years, I rarely strayed beyond hard rock and indie, but I've since widened the scope to include rap, classical, mainstream dance, soul and Motown. In fact, I recently said to my girlfriend I've caught myself listening to some records purely because of the quality of the pressing and not necessarily because I'm a fan of the artist. I subscribe to the Rough Trade Album Of The Month club, so each month, a random LP drops through the door."

How many records do you have?
"I've not counted my records and don't have a list (except for Mogwai, to save me from buying doubles), but I would estimate it to be in the region of 1,000-plus… which I do now keep alphabetically, so that I can find what I want, when I want."

What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"It's always difficult putting a value on them, but I do have a factory sample of the first Iron Maiden LP, fully autographed by the original line-up – of which not all are still alive, sadly. I have many, many limited and autographed examples, sometimes buying the same LP more than once in order to have the clear/coloured/boxset releases. I also have records that produce holograms when played, picture discs, 5" singles, debut 7" releases and all manner of collectible features."

What's the Holy Grail record that you'd most like to own?
"Happily, I don't have a 'Holy Grail' record, I've always managed to get the ones I've really wanted and never bought any because of potential future value. My local independent record shop is Chameleon in Aberdeen, and Michael does a great job of getting in the stuff I'm after."

What's your listening setup?
"A Michell GyroDec, with a Pro-Ject Evolution carbon-fibre tone arm carrying a Linn Asaka MC cart; a Leema Pulse II amp and a pair of Cambridge Audio Aero 6 floorstanding speakers." ●

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The VPI Prime Signature super table is based on the multi-award winning VPI Prime, which took the world by storm.

The VPI Prime Signature was voted *Turntable of the Year 2017* by Hi-Fi+ and received Hi-Fi News' *Outstanding Product*.

VPI is distributed in the UK by Renaissance.

www.renaissanceaudio.co.uk
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